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EVOLUTION OF HINDU SECTS

UPTO THE TIME OF SAMKARACĀRYA

Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya

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by

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MUNSHIRAM MANOHARLAL, NEW DELHI

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to
the sacred memory
of
Shrimati Indira Devi Chaudhurani

PREFACE

The present work incorporates my brochure on the *Evolution of Theistic Sects In Ancient India* in which I refrained from using the term Hindu to denote the various religious orders. Now, I find that savants like Louis Renou trace the germ of Hinduism in the Ṛg-Vedic age and this Hinduism is the nucleus out of which various theistic sects arose. I have taken the time of Śaṃkarācārya as the terminus point of my investigation for, the great Master turned the current of Hinduism in a new channel ushering in an altogether new epoch.

As I had been suffering from eye trouble, the task of proof reading was undertaken by my wife Dr. Latika Chattopadhyaya, M.A., Ph.D., while my daughter Kumari Anuradha prepared the Index.

S. Chattopadhyaya

CONTENTS

Page
Preface vii
Abbreviations xi

SECTION A

Chapter I
The Rise of Hindu Sectarianism .. 1
Formative Epoch 13
Age of Foreign Influence 16
The Early Phase of Tāntricism .. 18
Rise of Saṃkarācārya 22

SECTION B

The Vaiṣṇavas

Chapter I
The Formation of the Sect 24
Chapter II
The Pāñcarātra Sub-Sect 51
Chapter III
The Pāñcarātra Sub-Sect (Continued) .. 62
Chapter IV
The Gopāla Sub-Sect 68
Chapter V
The Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu Worshippers .. 77

SECTION C

The Śaivas

Chapter I
The Early Sects 90
Chapter II
Lakulīśa and his time 112
Chapter III
The Lakulīśa Pāśupatas 125
Chapter IV
The Pāśupatas and some Minor Sub-Sects .. 134

SECTION D

The Śāktas 150

SECTION E

The Sauras 171
Appendix
Was There a Kārtikeya Sect? 192

Select Bibliography 199
Index 205

ABBREVIATIONS

ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
ASIR	Archaeological Survey of India Reports.
AV	Atharva Veda.
BMC	The Coins of the Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria and India in the British Museum by P. Gardner. London, 1886.
DHI	Development of Hindu Iconography by J. N. Banerjea. Calcutta, 1956.
EHNI	Early History of North India by S. Chattopadhyaya. Calcutta, 1958.
EHVS	Materials for the study of the Early History of the Vaishnava Sect. by H. C. Raychaudhuri. Calcutta 1936.
Ep. Ind	Epigraphia Indica.
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics ited. by J. Hastings. Edinburgh, 1958.
GB	The Greeks in Bactria and India by W. W. Tarn. Cambridge, 1951.
IA or Ind. Ant	Indian Antiquary.
JA	Journal Asiatique.
JASB	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
JPASB	Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

JARS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.
MASI	Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India.
Mbh	Mahābhārata. Poona, 1929-33.
OST	Original Sanskrit Texts by J. Muir, Vol. IV. London, 1863.
Select Ins.	Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilisation, Vol. 1, by Dr. D. C. Sircar. Calcutta, 1942.
SB	A Study of Vaiṣṇavism by K. G. Goswami. Calcutta, 1956.
Tantras	Studies in the Tantras by P. C. Bagchi. Calcutta, 1939.
Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism etc.	Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems by R. G. Bhandarkar. Poona, 1928.

SECTION A

CHAPTER I

Rise of Hindu Sectarianism

Hinduism is perhaps the only major religion in the world that has not been started by a prophet. It developed primarily among the Aryans and absorbed influences from diverse sources, Proto-Austroloid, Proto-Mongoloid, Dravidian and others. As it is thus people's religion it naturally exhibits different forms ranging from high philosophical speculations to the lowest forms of superstitions. In the historical period, the Greeks, Scythians and other foreign hordes came to India. They were Hinduised, they made important contributions in their turn towards further development of the faith.

It should be noted at the outset that the term Hinduism is a misnomer. The earliest use of the word Hindu in India is met with in an inscription of the Vijayanagar kings of the 15th century A.D.[1] The term is of foreign origin, derived from the word Hidu (i.e., Sindhu) in the records of the Achaemenian kings of Iran,[2] whence came the name Ind or India through the agency of the Classical authors. The Hindus call their faith *sanātanadharma* or the eternal religion, of course with some justification. A religion that originated with the people has really no beginning and so long as it will maintain that popular character it shall have no end; only the outer form will change.

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[1] *Ep. Ind*, iii, p. 38.

[2] Chattopadhyaya, *The Achaemerids in India*, pp. 10 ff.

Nevertheless, the Hindus regard the Vedas as the fountain-spring of their faith and simultaneously maintain its sanātana or eternal character holding that the Vedas have no beginning since they are the direct utterances of the God. Though it is difficult for a student of history to take the statements in its face value, for he knows that the Vedas were composed by the Aryans after they came to India (*c.* 2000 B.C.), yet he will accept the view that the criterion of Hinduism is respect, however implied, for the Vedas, and any faith that is *professedly* against the lore cannot be included in that category. That is why Jainism, Cārvākism and Buddhism are dubbed as *nāstika*, i.e., atheist, while the Classical Sāṃkhya philosophy that ignores the existence of God even is called theistic. On this negative ground, many local sects that have no direct connection with the Vedic doctrine but at the same time do not show explicitly any disrespect towards the sacred work have been affiliated to the Hindu fold.

Some scholars make a fine distinction between Vedism and Hinduism. Vedism, it is believed, was primarily an Aryan religion while Hinduism a mixture of Aryan and non-Aryan belief; the first was ritualistic, the other was based mainly on devotion. Such propositions are only half correct. Already in the Vedic age we find the influence of non-Aryan belief on Aryan thought, elements of devotion can be traced in the *Devī-sūkta* and other verses. The *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* of the *Yajur Veda* records *gāyatrīs* of Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa.[1] The *Śvetāśvatara*, an earlier Upaniṣad, refers to the doctrine of *bhakti* towards God and preceptor (*guru*) which are the essential characteristics of sectarian Hinduism.[1] The germ of Hinduism thus was already there. It has been said very rightly that while Vedism was in charge of a priestly elite who served a military aristocracy, it may well be that the masses were already Hindu. The private or domestic cult was only Hindu practice with a veneer of hieratic formulae.[2]

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[1] *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā*, ii. 9.1.

The sectarian Hinduism assuming a semi-corporate activity centring round a deity finds a direct reference in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini, a work of *c*. 400 B.C.[3] Reference is made in it to the *bhaktas* of Vāsudeva and Arjuna, the Yādava and Kaurava heroes. The worship evidently prevailed among the Yadus and the Kurus, both Aryan tribes. So it appears that we may tentatively arrive at the following facts :

(a) The germ of sectarianism may be traced in the later Vedic literature, i.e., it originated in Aryan environment.

(b) Sectarian Hinduism had *bhakti* as its basis but got an additional impetus through the spirit of hero-worship, e. g., the worship of Vāsudeva, etc.

To prove the non-Aryan origin of the Hindu sects, some scholars draw our attention to two accounts : *first*, the *Niddesa*, and *secondly*, a statement of the *Mahābhāṣya*. The *Niddesa* refers to the worshippers of the elephants, horse, cow, dog, crow, Vāsudeva, Baladeva, Punnabhadda, fire, Nāga Supanna, Yaksa, Asura, Gandharva, Mahārāja,

---

[1] The last verse of the Upaniṣad runs as follows :
Yasya deve parābhaktiryathā deve tathā gurau,
Tasyaite kathita=hyartha prakāśante mahātmanaḥ.

[2] Louis Renou, *Religions of India*, p. 6.

[3] *Aṣṭadhyāyī*, IV, 3.95; IV. 3.98.

Sun, Moon, Indra, Brahmā, Devas etc.[1] It has been inferred from this list that as the worship of Nāga etc. are described in the Buddhist lore of lower order (such gods in fact, are called *vyantara devatā*) and as the worship of Vāsudeva etc. is included in this category, sectarian worship, based on *bhakti*, must have originated in the lower strata of the society. Such an assumption is wholly unwarranted. Even at the present time we find worshippers of cows, snakes etc. existing side by side with the Vaiṣṇavas who look upon their god as no other than Nārāyana-Viṣṇu, undoubtedly a Vedic deity, and mutter the *mantra* '*Om namo Nārāyaṇāya*'. Such followers of the Rāmānuja and other saints are versed in philosophy and different branches of knowledge. Further there is no evidence that even in ancient period there had been sects centring round elephant, horse, cow, crow etc. Such worship had been individual or occasional in character as we find even at the present time in India. The *Niddesa* groups together non-Buddhist faiths clearly with a spirit of condemnation. Therefore, any inference regarding the origin of the Hindu sects on the strength of this passage will hardly be a logical one. Similarly it may be noted that the figure of Gaja Lakṣmī appears on the coins of the kings of Ayodhyā, Ujjayinī, on an uninscribed coin from Kauśāmbī and on the relief carvings on the early monuments of the Madhya Pradesh region. But here we cannot possibly detect the presence of a Gaja-Lakṣmī sect, for, as J.N. Banerjea states, Lakṣmī, as the Indian goddess of wealth and prosperity, was respected by Indians in general. Allan points out that the effigy of Indra is found on the coins of the Pañcāla chief Indramitra and that of Agni on the coins of Agnimitra, another king of the same region. These minor evidences of Indra and Agni worship clearly show that it was not of a sectarian character, but was favoured occasionally in the Pañcāla country, which corresponds roughly to modern Rohilkhand and a part of the Central Doab. Patañjali in his *Mahābhāṣya* states that images of Siva, Skanda and Viśākha were being made for the purpose of worship during his time (*c*.150 B.C.) and also informs us that the Mauryas in their greed of gold used to sell such images.[1] There is no archaeological evidence to show, however, that the worship of Skanda-Viśākha had assumed a sectarian character in the pre-Christian epoch, though it became a very popular cult, specially among the Yaudheyas who occupied the present Johiabar region in the Punjab, at the beginning of the Christian era.[2]

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[1] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism Saivaism* etc., pp. 3-4.

In the *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 422, Bevan gives an excellent account of the deities of India as noticed by the pre-Christian classical writers : "Of the gods worshipped by the Indians the Greeks learnt little. One writer cited by Strabo (Clitarchus ?) had asserted that they worshipped Zeus Ombrios (Zeus of the Rain-Storm), the river Ganges and the local demons. As we have seen, Siva and Kṛishna are to be discerned through the Greek names Dionysios and Heracles in some statements of our sources. One member of Alexander's suite, his chief usher, Charles of Mytalene, is quoted as saying the Indians worshipped a god Soroadios, whose name being interpreted meant 'maker of wine'. It is recognised that the Indian name which Charles heard was 'Sūryadeva Sundeva'. Some ill-educated interpreter must have been misled by the resemblance of Sūrya 'Sun' to *surā* 'wine'."

---

[1] *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇini, v. 3. 99.

[2] *vide*, Appendix.

There is no evidence of the existence of any Ganges or demon worshipping sects, referred to by the Classical authors, in the Pre-Christian age, though there is every possibility that some particular person or persons may have worshipped them. Similarly, Aśoka refers to various religious rites performed by the womenfolk of his time for which he had nothing but condemnation.

Patañjali while commenting on the *sūtra* of Pāṇini *Devatādvande ca*[1] divides the deities worshipped during his time into two groups : *vaidika* or Vedic and *laukika* or popular. In the *first* group he includes Brahmā and Prajāpati while in the *second* Śiva and Vaiśravaṇa. It has been held that Śiva and Vaiśravaṇa (yakṣa) are un-Vedic gods having sects centring them, unlike the cases of Brahmā and Prajāpati. This interpretation is hardly acceptable. Patañjali is merely referring to un-Aryan and Aryan gods and not to sects. Sects gradually centred round both Vedic and un-Vedic gods. Thus the nucleus of Rudra-Śiva sect is undoubtedly Aryan while Vāsudeva was an Aryan hero. In fact, Hinduism is the logical development of Vedism in peculiar Indian surroundings. Hindu sectarianism thus absorbed many un-Aryan ideas and practices. We may note here the following verses of the Bhagvad-*gītā* :

Yānti devavratā devān pitṛn yānti pitṛvratāḥ,
Bhūtāni yānti bhūtejyā madyājino=pi māṃ.
Patraṃ puṣpaṃ phalaṃ toyaṃ yo me bhaktyā prayacchanti
Tadahaṃ bhaktyupahṛtamaśnāmi prayatātmanaḥ.[2]

They who worship the gods go to the gods, to the (divinised) ancestors go the ancestor-worshippers, to elemental spirits go those who sacrifice to elemental spirits; but my worshippers come to Me.'

---

[1] *Mahābbhāṣya,* vi. 3.26.
[2] *Bhagwad-gītā,* ix. 25-6.

'He who offers to Me with devotion leaves, flowers, a fruit, a cup of water, that offering of love from the striving soul is acceptable to Me.'

If we study the above verses with reference to verses 21-22 where the Vedic rituals and sacrifices are looked down upon, it will be apparent that the above account refers to different types of Hindu worshippers : (1) the followers of the *devas*, (2) the followers of the ancestors, (3) the followers of the elements, (4) those who pray to their divinities through the offering of leaves, flowers, fruits and water. The last mode of worship has been dubbed to be un-Aryan, Dravidian or Austric as the case may be. On the other hand, the worship of ancestors, and the elemental spirits especially, are Aryan in character.

The *Ṛg-Veda* reveals a picture in which sectarianism was not possible among the aristocratic group. The aim of worship was primarily to appease the gods and thereby to obtain from them the desired material object of life. Different gods, it was believed, were endowed with different attributes and so with particular object in view a particular god was to be propitiated. Thus Indra who was the god of cloud and thunderbolt was worshipped for the development of agriculture and also for killing the enemy. The Sun, the source of life, was naturally one of the greatest gods. Thus the deities were worshipped for different purposes with strictly laid down formulae requiring right pronunciation and right accent, a process that could hardly have been performed by ordinary men. This complicated procedure led to the rise of a priestly class, who monopolised the religious life of the society and thus became the most influential group. The gods were divided into three classes as follows :

1. Heavenly gods—Sūrya, Sabitā, Pūṣā, Mitra, Varuṇa, Dyauspitā, Viṣṇu, the two Aśvins and ūṣā etc.
2. Atmospheric gods—Indra, Aja, Vāyu, Parjanya, Rudra and Maruts etc.
3. Earthly gods—Agni, Bṛhaspati, Soma, Sarasvatī etc.

Though in the Vedas we not unoften find the presence of monotheistic ideas, in a divine cosmogony which attributed to the gods only compartmental powers absolute devotion was almost impossible and hence there could hardly have been full-fledged sects. This is one side of the picture. S. V. Venkatesvara finds in the *Ṛg-Veda* itself references to image-worship which would presume the first step towards sectarianism. An image when worshipped would require devotion and concentration on the part of the worshipper and when these factors would combine with the idea that it was all powerful, a step would be taken towards sectarianism. The passage that is frequently referred as pointing to image worship runs as follows :

Ka imaṃ daśabhirmamendraṃ Krīṇāti dhenubhiḥ,
Yadā vṛtrāṇi jaṃghanadathainaṃ me punaradadat.[1]

'Who will buy this Indra for ten cows ! When he has slain his foes, he may give him back to me.'

Further, it is pointed out, the Ṛg-Veda, i. 21.2 states—*Indrāgni suṃbhutā naraḥ* (men decorate Indra and Agni); iv. 58.3 states—*catvāri Sṛṅgā trayo asya pādā dve śīrṣe sapta hastāsa asya* (he has four horns, three feet, two heads and seven hands). Such passages are interpreted to show the existence of image worship in the Ṛg-Vedic age. If this view be accepted then it may be regarded as the first step towards sectarianism. Macdonell, however, maintains the opposite view in interpreting the passages.[1]

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[1] *Ṛg-veda*, iv. 24.10.

Though the Vedic gods are divided into three different categories, Yāska maintains nevertheless that there were three chief deities presiding over the three regions, viz., the Sun over the *heaven*, Indra or Vāyu over the *atmosphere* and Agni over the *earth*. It is generally held that Yāska lived about 600 B.C. when consequently we may assign the first germ of sectarianism which reduces the power of the different godheads into three deities, who became the supreme object of devotion. This was also the period when the Vedic ritualism was gradually giving place to Upaniṣadic thoughts in the upper level of the society. The Upaniṣadic thoughts mainly clustered round the following doctrines :

1. The theory of birth and *karma* : The Upaniṣads believe that 'whatever action is done by an individual leaves behind it some sort of potency which has the power to ordain for him joy or sorrow in the future according as it is good or bad.
2. The doctrine of *mukti* : When our action is exhausted by our cycle of birth, the soul attains the supreme bliss. In other words, it becomes one with the Brahman and the soul has no more to pass through the cycle of birth and death.
3. The maxim that *enjoyment must be through renunciation* : To be free of the shackles of *karma* leading to birth and death, we need not give up *karma*, but must act in such a way or rather with such a mental attribute that we be not attached to any worldly affairs.

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[1] *Vedic Mythology*, pp. 17-18.

From the above discussions, it will be evident that the upper stratum of the society became divided into two groups according as they laid stress on costly sacrifices on the one hand or on speculative knowledge on the other. But the common men were bewildered as they could follow neither of them. They felt frustrated and naturally their mind wanted a simpler form of religion. Herein lay the earliest germ of Hinduism, a religion that primarily centred round feeling and not intellectualism or costly observances. In this they were encouraged by their Dravidian brethren who were practising a simpler method worshipping different deities with flowers, leaves, water etc. It naturally appealed to them and there thus arose a new class that cared neither for the Vedic *karma* nor for the Upaniṣadic *jnānaṃ*.

When the Aryans came to India, the Dravidians and the Proto-Austroloids were already in the country. They are the dāsas of the Vedic literature condemned as black, nose-less, non-sacrificers, phallus-worshippers, harsh-tongued etc. J. Marshall has pointed out that phallus was worshipped in the Mohenjo-daro area, and as phallus-worship later on became a part of Hinduism, of course with an elevated philosophy at the background, it is clear that the Aryans came into contact with the Indus men. The theory that the Indus culture was destroyed by the invading Aryans goes against available evidences. The Ṛg-Veda associates the *dāsas* with *puras* and wealth, evidently acquired through trade. The *puras* refer to the Indus cities where at least four different types of skeletons have been unearthed; a low-headed dolichocephalic type with primitive features (Veddoid or Austroloid ?), the medium-headed and smooth 'Mediterranean', a rugged long-headed and large-brained type (Proto-Nordic) and lastly a brachycephalic type of the Alpine and Armenoid varieties. The second group, i.e., the medium-headed and smooth 'Mediterranean', clearly represents the Dravidians proving indirectly that the Aryans and the Dravidians were both living in the Indus Valley. This is also proved by the account of the Battle of the Ten kings as given in the Ṛg-Veda. The Bharata king Sudās had to face a confederacy of ten powers; the Turvaśas, Yadus, Purus, Anus and Druhyus, all supposed to be of Aryan stock, along with Ahina, Paktha, Bhalānas, Siva and Viṣānin, supposed to be un-Aryan by Indologists. Thus at the time of Sudās, the Ravi formed the boundary line between the territory of the Bharatas and *āryas cum dāsas* on the west. The theory of peaceful co-existence between the Aryans and the Harappans gains strength when we find that Divodās, a predecessor of Sudās, is represented as fighting against the Purus, Yadus, Turvaśas, the *dāsa* chief Sambara and the Paṇis. The common Aryan thus imbibed many traits of the Harappans, mainly of Dravidian stock, and also of the Proto-Austroloids, though they maintained outwardly the tradition of Aryan culture. And in this fusion lay the future germ of Hinduism. From this Harappan-Dravidian sources came the tradition of *yoga*, Siva-Paśupati cult with *liṅga* worship, the cult of the Mother goddess, the worship of trees, tanks, animals, as well as the system of worship or *pūja* as already stated, with water, leaves, flowers etc. These cults again were augmented later on from other ethnic cultures. If the statement of the *Bhagavad-gītā* that anyone who offers with *devotion* flowers etc. that offer is accepted by God, has at its bottom a Dravidian background, then it must be held that *bhakti*, the pivot of Hindu sectarianism, came from the Dravidian source. On the other hand, many of the Hindu magicoreligious rituals and conceptions of *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, of *Sapta-mātṛkā* came from the Austric sources. Austric influence on the Atharvan rituals can also be traced. All these diverse elements, however, were bound together with the chord of Aryan tie.

Though in the Vedic age, the bulk of the Aryans might have been Hindu by religion, the sectarian character of the faith had not yet been prominent. The rise of the Upaniṣadic teachers who discarded the Vedic sacrifices, and of the Buddhists, Jains, Cārvākas etc. caused a revolution that threatened the position of the sacerdotal class, which was now forced to make a compromise with the mass following the new method of worship and had to give its sanction to this religion of the mass, i.e., Hinduism. Hindu sectarianism was further accentuated by the following factors :

(a) The gradual development of the theory of *bhakti* divided the people into groups each following its own god. *Bhakti* or devotional faith implies not only a personal god but also a supreme God. It is thus monotheistic in character and thus the *bhakta* or the devotee could ascribe all the attributes of monotheism round his deity. This created an easy way for the absorption of the Upaniṣadic ideas. Thus in the field of religion people were divided into groups each having a personal god and each looking upon the god as the supreme.

(b) The *Yoga* school of thought, which may be as old as the days of the Upaniṣads and which might originally have been derived from the Indus Valley people or the Dravidians, insisted on the fixing of the mind on a particular object and each of the groups now made its own god the only object of meditation.

(c) The theory of *Japa*, or muttering of the name of the god already found in the Viṣṇu and Rudra *gāyatrī* of the *Yajur Veda* further crystallized groups around fixed and particular deities.

The reference to *bhakti* to *deva* and *guru* in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* is undoubtedly very interesting (*supra*). Sectarian Hinduism prescribes that the *guru* or preceptor will initiate his disciple in the *mantra* while the whole process is considered as a secret one. not to be known through any scripture but handed down through the *ācārya* or *guru*. The *ācārya* is respected like the deity. On a particular auspicious date to be determined by astronomical calculation, the *ācārya* initiates his disciple who has to pass through a very strict austere life on the day. This practice developed more and more under the influence of Tāntricism and is a well-known practice among the modern Hindus.

In this connection it will be interesting to note the different epochs of Hindu sectarianism before Saṃkarācārya with whom a new era dawned on Hindu life :

Formative Epoch

Available sources, literary as well as archaeological, indicate that in the closing centuries of the pre-Christian age Vaiṣṇavism had its chief centre in the Madhyadeśa or Aryāvarta, while Saivism, Sāktaism and the Solar cult had their votaries mainly, though not absolutely, outside the Aryandom. This possibly signifies that Vaiṣṇavism was orthodox in its origin, while the sects following the other three cults had imbibed many heterodox traits. Aryāvarta, or the Aryandom, has been defined in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, *Vaśiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* and the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, all belonging to the pre-Christian age, as the region lying to the east of Adarśa or Adarśana, i.e. the place where the river Sarasvatī disappears in the sand, the present Hissar in the Punjab; to the west of Kālakavana, usually identified with a wild tract near Allahabad; to the south of the Himalayas; and to the north of the Pāriyātra, i.e. the western part of the present Vindhya range.[1] Linguisticians point out that this tract is the home of the language belonging to the Inner Band of the Aryan Group while surrounding it lies the region where the Outer Band of the Aryan tongue prevails.

The Vaiṣṇavas had their citadel in the Sūrasena country of the Madhyadeśa (present Mathura region in the U. P.) while the Saivas, according to Megasthenes, lived in the mountains, whence evidently they expanded their jurisdiction over other parts of the country. The Vaiṣṇavas also played a no less dominant role and from their base at Mathura they extended their sway westwards at least upto Taxila, and in the south the northern fringe of the Maharashtra country became their stronghold. The Sāktas had hardly any sway over the Aryāvarta country and flourished in the region lying to the west and the east of the same though a few votaries of the cult may have settled in the Ganges-Jumna valley without playing any important role. The position of the Sauras, or the sect worshipping the Sun as the Supreme God, is indeed confusing. Sun-worship is as old as the days of the Vedas and it may naturally be expected that Aryandom would be the home of the Sun-worshippers. The Mahābhārata refers to such worshippers in the camp of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas.[2] The evidence of the early Classical writers and the available archaeological records, however, indicates that in the closing centuries of the pre-Christian epoch the sect had been living mainly in the Punjab, South Bihar and the western part of the Maharashtra country. One of the reasons that led the devotees of the cult to thrive in these un-orthodox regions may have been the fact that they had absorbed elements from the foreign Magian Sun cult as well as from the heterodox Buddhist creed.

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[1] *CAGI*, *Intro*, p. vi.

[2] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 88.

In writing the history of the Brāhmaṇical sects of the pre-Christian age, the evidences supplied by the Mahābhārata naturally pose a problem. The work was composed over centuries spreading from *c*. 500 B.C. to 300 A.D. and therefore naturally it is difficult to determine the relative age of the evidences. On several occasions, however, I have utilised the materials supplied by it in this section on the ground that they have appeared to me to be rather earlier in age and even on such occasions they have been used when they are corroborated by other available sources of the age. Such corroborations naturally prove that the tradition really belongs to the pre-Christian epoch.

Coming to the archaeological evidences we find that for the history of the Vaiṣṇava sect of the pre-Christian age we have coins as well as epigraphic records; for the Saiva sects no epigraph but coins and icons only; for the Sun-worshipping sect or the Sauras, icons; and for the Sāktas or the Mother-goddess worshipping sect only several terracotta objects. If we may hazard a conjecture, these archaeological evidences show that Viṣṇu cult had its votaries among the upper classes of the society as well as the mass, for it is generally believed that epigraphs are mainly meant for the upper educated class while coins are concerned with the mass. Thus Saivism may have been a religion of the common people.

Numismatic sources disclose the cults of several other gods and goddesses in this age, e.g., Agni, Indra, etc., but there is no evidence that there was an Agni sect or a sect worshipping Indra as the supreme god. There is hardly any reason for believing in the existence of more than the above-mentioned four sects in Brāhmaṇical religion in the pre-Christian age.

The Age of Foreign Influence

After the fall of the Mauryas in *c.* 187 B.C., the Greeks occupied the North-Western Frontier Province and the Punjab and ruled there for nearly 200 years. The Greek rule on the Indian borderland was supplanted by that of the Scytho-Kuṣāṇas who maintained their sway over the Ganges-Jumna valley till the last quarter of the Second century A.D.[1] The Greeks and the Scytho-Kuṣāṇas were thoroughly Indianised and were ultimately merged in the vast mass of the Indian population.[2] They adopted Indian culture and religion and at the same time contributed a good deal of their own towards the development of Indian culture and thought. Under Kaniṣka I, the greatest of the Kuṣāṇa kings, the Ganges-Jumna valley became a part of the empire that included portions of Central Asia. Indian colonists now went to that distant land and helped in the spread of Indian culture and religion, specially Buddhism. Central Asia on her part also inspired Indian thinkers and even contributed some gods to the Buddhist pantheon. Levi has pointed out that Mañjuśri, Amitābha and Kṣitigarbha of Mahāyāna Buddhism originated in central Asia and later on found their way into India.[1] Turning to the Brāhmaṇical sects we find that there came undoubted foreign influence on the Śāktas in this period while the Saura sect enriched itself with newer ideas from the Scythian Sun-cult.

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[1] For the Greeks and the Scytho-Kusanas, vide *EHNI*, Chs. I-IV; *A Comprehensive History of India*, ed. K. A. Nilakantha Sastri, Chs. VI-VIII.

[2] Bhandarkar, *IA.*, 1911.

We cannot detect any direct foreign influence on the Vaiṣṇavism of the age. The *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the Mahābhārata,[2] which speaks of the Pāñcarātras, a new sub-sect of the Vaiṣṇavas, records the story of Nārada's voyage to Svetadvīpa where lived Nārāyaṇa-Hari, and, as the story runs, the Pāñcarātras of the age evidently drew their inspiration from this far-off land. The account would be discussed fully later on, but it may be stated here that available evidences indicate that Svetadvīpa was somewhere in Central Asia to the north of Pamir, and the account thus appears to have been composed in the Scytho-Kuṣāṇa age.

Historians generally believe that Dakṣa's story in the Mahābhārata[3] cannot be earlier than the 2nd-3rd century A.D. and the recent recensions of the Epic by the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute seems to support the theory. It gives an account of the heterodox Pāśupata sub-sect of the Saivas and it clearly pre-supposes the existence of Sāṃkhya-yoga school of thought. The story of Upamanyu,[4] on the other hand, must be later than the time of the Guddimallam and Bhita lingas inasmuch as we find in it a development of the philosophy of the cult which denies the phallic character of the liṅga altogether. It may also safely be assigned to the early centuries of the Christian era. The Guddimallam and the Bhita liṅgas, as already stated, are no doubt phallic emblems.

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[1] Levi, as quoted in Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. iii. p. 221.
[2] *Mbh.*, xii, 349ff.
[3] *Ibid.*, xii, 283ff.
[4] Muir, *OST*, iv, p. 161.

The continued rule of the foreign hordes on the soil of India naturally led to the rise of national feeling which ultimately gave rise though for a short period to a new sect—the Kārtikeyas or the worshippers of the god Skanda-Kārtikeya. Skanda was the lord of warfare and naturally the tribes that fought against the foreigners like the Kuṣāṇas became votaries of the cult. The unsettled political condition of India in the third century A.D. when the country became studded with petty local states often at feud with one another added a new impetus to the cult.

The Early Phase Of Tantricism

(From the rise of the Guptas to the advent of Saṃkara)

With the accession of the Imperial Guptas on the throne of Magadha in *c*. 319-20 A.D. we enter into a new period of Indian history when orthodox Brāhmaṇism got its upper hand through the patronage bestowed by the Imperial crowns. But curiously enough India began to face gradually a new phase of religious practices and beliefs in which heterodox, and even foreign elements, began to play the dominant role. The *Bhakti* cult of the former days was not completely dispensed with, but surely it was relegated to the background. Henceforth the Brāhmaṇical religion flowed in the channel of the *Tantras* which gave Indian religions, Brāhmaṇical as well as Buddhist, a new colouring. The *Tantras* form a great enigma with the Indologists and though much has been written on the subject, still its doctrines remain mysterious and the Tāntrics hold that the same can only be mastered by a person who has been properly initiated by a competent *guru*. The earliest available Tāntric manuscript, now preserved in the

Asiatic Society, Calcutta, the *Kubjikāmata* Tantra, is written in the later Gupta characters, showing that it belongs to *c.* 6th-7th century A.D. H.P. Sastri in his *Catalogue* mentions another Tāntric manuscript, the *Niśvāsa-Saṃhitā*, which possibly belongs to 8th century.[1] These manuscripts clearly show that the *Tantras* preach a new doctrine of *sādhanā* that was accepted by some of the sects.. The *Tantras*, in fact, mark a distinct revolution in the field of ancient religious history. The secret of the cult consists in the worship of *yantra* or diagrams symbolically representing the god, *mantra*, *mudrā* and *nyāsa*, i.e. chanting of some sacred sounds, various gestures made with fingers and movement of the hands in different posture and the control of the breath that bring the deity in the body of the worshipper.

It must be noted here with all emphasis that it is often wrongly believed that Tāntricism is identical with Sāktaism. This notion evidently arose from the fact that in the later days the Mother-goddess was mainly worshipped after the Tāntric fashion, but by no means Tāntricism and Sāktaism can be regarded as identical. *Tantra*, in fact, enunciates a new form of *sādhanā* in which we find the *karma* of the Vedas, the *jñāna* of the Upaniṣads and the *bhakti* of the Purāṇas and the Great Epic.[2] It is a synthesis of all the earlier forms of sādhanā, and in fact, besides the Buddhist Tantras, we have the *Tantras* of the Saivas, Sāktas, Vaiṣṇavas and other sects.[3] It is thus clear that the *Tantras* preach a new doctrine that was accepted by all. Eliot is undoubtedly right when he makes a distinction between Tāntricism and Sāktaism.[1]

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[1] H. P. Sastri, *Nepal Catalogue*, I, p. lxxvii.
[2] N. K. Brahma, *Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā*, pp. 274 ff.
[3] Woodroffe, *Shakti and Shakta*, p. 55.

The basis of the Tāntric philosophy is the doctrine of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* as propounded by the Sāṃkhya school of thought. The *Puruṣa* can work but only through *Prakṛti*, or, in other words, *Puruṣa* is inactive while *Prakṛti* is active and hence she is apparently more important than the former.

From the evidence of the Tāntric manuscripts referred to above it may be presumed that in 6th-7th century A.D., the Tāntric doctrine had become well-established at least in North India. Precisely at this period we find the prevalence of the same doctrine among the Buddhists also, and it is an admitted fact that in this respect the Brāhmaṇical and the Buddhist doctrines influenced each other. Padmasambhava who founded Lamaism in Tibet and who is said to have lived in Gaya and Nalanda was, according to tradition, a great Tāntric scholar, and if we accept the view that he arrived in Tibet in 747 A.D., then we may possibly infer that the Tāntric practices had already been prevalent among the Buddhists before the middle of the 8th century. The date may be somewhat earlier still as proved by the manuscript of the *Kubjikāmata*, referred to above, and also by the fact that several *Tantras* were translated into Chinese in the 7th century during the rule of the T'ang dynasty.

At about this period we find the prevalence of the Tāntric doctrine in South-East Asia as well. P. C. Bagchi draws our attention to the inscription of Sdok-Kak Thom (discovered in the province of Sisophon, Cambodia) which "mentions the introduction of mystic cult of Devarāja along with some Tāntric texts in Kambuja during the reign of king Jayavarman II who came to the throne in the Saka year 724 (=802 A.D.)." The inscription speaks of four Tantric texts, *Siraścheda*, *Vināśikha*, *Sammoha* and *Nayottara*. After a critical study of the record, P. C. Bagchi observes : "Thus we see that the four Tantric texts mentioned in the inscription of 802 A.D. during the reign of Jayavarman II are partly preserved in old *Mss.* in Nepal Darbar Library. The *Nayottara* was probably the same as the *Naya*—and *Uttara*—sūtras which form a part of the *Niśvāsa-tattvasaṃhitā*, now preserved in *Mss.* of Gupta writing of the 8th century A.D. It was composed much earlier than the date of the *Mss.* and may be safely placed in the 6th-7th century A.D. The *Siraścheda* was in all probability the same as the original *Jayadratha-Yāmala* of which an extensive text copied in the 12th-13th century A.D. exists in the Darbar Library. The *Vināśikha* seems to have been a supplement to the *Jayadratha-Yāmala* and the *Sammoha*, the original, on which the later *Tantras* of that name were based. The four *Tantras* were of North-Indian origin."[1]

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[1] Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. ii. pp. 280ff.

4109

In the period under review we find undoubted Tāntric influence on the Saktas and to a lesser degree on the Saivas and the Vaiṣṇavas.[2] Curiously enough even in this age the

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[1] P. C. Bagchi, *Tantras*, p. 15.

[2] B. Bhattacharya and some other scholars think that the *Tantras* are pre-Buddhistic in origin (*Sādhanamātā* p. xvii), while Durga Prasad has tried to explain some of the symbols occurring in the pre-Christian coins and seals by attributing Tāntric character to them (*FASB*, 1934. Num. Suppl.). These symbols may be forerunner of the *Tantras*, but as proved by the archaeological evidences, Tāntricism cannot be earlier than the later Gupta age. We find in the *Tantras* traces of many earlier elements because, as already stated, the *Tantras* try to make a synthesis of the different forms of *śādhanā* as propounded in the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Epic and the Purāṇas. So the presence of these elements cannot claim for the *Tantras* a hoary antiquity as asserted by some scholar .

Magian Sun cult made further progress and gathered round it votaries from wider area. This feature can only be explained by the supposition that by this time the Magian cult must have spread its influence among the orthodox class, a process that had already begun in the early centuries of the Christian era. There are a few epigraphs of the Gupta kings referring to god Kārtikeya but no evidence is available regarding the existence of a Kārtikeya sect in this period. The cult may have played some part in the life of the people, but the existence of a sect is quite another thing.

Rise Of Śaṃkarācārya

With Saṃkarācārya we arrive at a new age of Hinduism. The date of the great teacher is a matter of great controversy. Macdonell and Keith think that he lived about 750 A.D. According to traditions current in the monasteries of South India, however, the Master flourished in the middle of the 7th century, a tradition that has been eloquently propounded by Telang. A Kambuja inscription of 9th century A.D. mentions a teacher describing himself as *Bhagavān Saṃkarācārya-pādānudhyāta*, which, it has been held, seems to support Macdonell's and Keith's theory. Depending upon a manuscript, a summary of which has been given in *Indian Antiquary*, 1882, pp. 174 ff. K. B. Pathak points out that Saṃkarācārya was born in A.D. 788.

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Among the Hindus of the present day, there are five principal sects : *Śaivas*, worshippers of Siva; *Śāktas*, worshippers of the different forms of the Mother-goddess; *Vaiṣṇavas*, worshippers of Viṣṇu in his various incarnations (*avatāras*), especially those of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma; *Gāṇapatyas*, worshippers of Gaṇeśa, the elephant headed god; and *Sauras*, the worshippers of the Sun. The last two sects have a very few votaries to-day, though it is ordained that at the outset of any Hindu worship of any other god, these two deities should be worshipped first. R. G. Bhandarkar points out that Gaṇapati is worshipped with great pomp in the state of Maharashtra in the fourth new moon day of the month of *Bhādra*, corresponding to mid-August to mid-September. From the historical point of view again, while we have the evidence of the existence of the *Sauras* at a very early period, Gaṇapati had no sect around him before the time of Saṃkarācārya.

SECTION B

The Vaiṣṇavas

CHAPTER I

The Formation Of The Sect

Vaiṣṇavism, as its name implies, is the religion in which the Vedic deity Viṣṇu is the supreme object of worship. In the form, however, in which Vaiṣṇavism was prevalent in the period just preceding the Christian era, the highest deity was the human hero Vāsudeva of the Sātvata family who gradually came to be identified with Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa. Even in this triad Vāsudeva held the supreme position. Pāṇini points out that the sect was called *Vāsudevaka*, not Vaiṣṇava.[1] In fact, the name Vaiṣṇava is rather late and occurs for the first time in the *Svargārohaṇaparvan*, ch. vi, v. 97 of the Mahābhārata which is supposed to have been composed about 300 A.D. or a little earlier. Among the earlier designations of the sect, apart from the one mentioned by Pāṇini, were *Bhāgavata*, met with in the Besnagar inscription of Heliodoros of second century B.C., *Sātvata*, *Aikāntika* and *Pāñcarātrika*. The name Sātvata is significant as it points to the family to which Vāsudeva was born, while Aikāntika is an adjective denoting *ekāntabhakti* or absolute devotion to Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. The connotation of the term Pāñcarātra is still a matter of dispute and will be discussed later on. In any case, it also centres round Vāsudeva and some of his family members.

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[1] *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, iv. 3.98.

Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa are Vedic deities. In the Ṛg-Veda, Viṣṇu appears to be a solar deity and he is addressed to in at least five independent hymns. It is generally believed that in that far remote age he was an unimportant god, and it was only in the age of the *Brāhmaṇas* that he came to occupy an exalted position. Hutton thinks that he was the god of the mass or the ethnic substrata very meagrely represented in the sacred hymns. Such speculations, however, have little historical value in the absence of positive evidences. Keith, on the other hand, opines that "it would be impossible to deny to Viṣṇu the position of a great god in the period of the Ṛg-Veda, for that would be to forget that the comparative prominence of the gods is not necessarily brought out fully in that collection, which is mainly concerned with the Soma sacrifice, and which does not, therefore, take great account of those deities who are not of much consequence in that sacrifice. Of course, that the god is not a great god of that sacrifice is to a certain extent a proof that he is not a god regarded with the highest importance by many of the priests. But his interest in human life as a protector of embryos is a sign of his importance in ordinary life, which should not be overlooked".[1] The last assertion does not necessarily prove an exalted position of the god (*cf.* Ṣaṣṭhī in modern Bengal), while for the rest of Keith's theory it may be pointed out that it lacks positive evidence. In fact, in the Ṛg-Veda his importance lies more in his being a friend of Indra, whom he helps in his fight with the demon Vṛtra, and he only shares "the other attributes common to the Vedic gods of being a liberal and bountiful guardian, a generous deliverer and an ordainer." There were priests, no doubt, who preached for the equality of all gods, and thus it is declared : "Amongst you, O gods, there is none who is small or young. You are all equally great".[1] If we look at Viṣṇu in this background, then of course it may be maintained that Viṣṇu may already have been a great god in the Ṛg-Vedic age.

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[1] Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upaniṣads*, i., p. 109.

It is in the *Brāhmaṇas* that the greatness of Viṣṇu is fully brought out. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* declares that he occupies the highest place among the gods[2] while the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* makes him a personification of sacrifice and the most excellent of gods.[3] Two interesting stories are recorded about him : *first*, while one day Viṣṇu was asleep keeping his head on the string of a bow, other gods who had already become jealous of his rising position, sent ants to cut the string. As a result the bow jumped, the head of Viṣṇu became severed from the body and it went to heaven to become the yonder Sun, after producing the sound *Ghṛṇi*. It may be noted that *Ghṛṇi* is the Tantric *mantra* par excellence for worshipping the Sun-god. Such accounts developed evidently out of the legend that Viṣṇu covered universe with his three strides[4]. Later commentators think that it refers to the morning Sun on the eastern horizon, the noon Sun in the middle sky and the setting Sun on the west. Such stories illustrate the identification of Viṣṇu with the Sun-god.

The rise of Viṣṇu in the later Vedic age as the most important deity was due to several factors, the chief of which was his identification with local divinities, possibly of the un-Aryan folk. Herein comes the story of the *avatāras* or incarnations of the god in the form of dwarf, boar, tortoise, fish etc. Evidently these were originally totems of the people like Proto-Austroloids, who, as the *Śatarudrīya* litany of the Yajur-Veda shows, were now being gradually merged into the Aryan society,[1] and with this merging their gods also came to be merged with the Aryan gods. The fact that these totems were being absorbed in the Viṣṇu cult shows that now Viṣṇu, along with Rudra, was gradually becoming the deity of the mass, and thus when sectarianism arose on the Indian soil naturally Viṣṇu and Rudra-Siva became the greatest gods.

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[1] *Ṛg-Veda*, viii. 30.1.

[2] *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, i. 1.

[3] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, as quoted by H. C. Raychaudhuri, EHVS, p. 16.

[4] *Ṛg-Veda*, i. 22.18.

The *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* states that Viṣṇu taking the form of a dwarf conquered the three worlds.[2] Elsewhere Prajāpati is described as a boar and the same description of Viṣṇu in the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* simply shows that while Viṣṇu on the one hand was absorbing the totems of the un-Aryan people of India he was gradually absorbing in himself the elements of Prajāpati on the other. It will be shown (*infra*) how the Vaiṣṇava cult marched on by assimilating other gods, e.g. Arjuna, and this process evidently had its beginning in the later Vedic age. As Keith has pointed out: "the transfer of myths from Prajāpati to Viṣṇu is illustrated in an interesting way in the case of two other of his incarnations in the post-Vedic literature. The fish which, according to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, in the flood legend saved Manu, is identified in the Mahābhārata with Prajāpati, but in the Purāṇas becomes Viṣṇu, and, while in the *Brāhmaṇas* Prajāpati is stated to have become a tortoise, moving in the primeval waters, when about to create offspring, the Purāṇas turn the tortoise into an incarnation of Viṣṇu, devised in order to recover various objects which were lost in the deluge".[1]

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[1] Muir, *OST*, iv, pp. 268ff; compare the mention of the *Niṣādas* in v. 27.

[2] *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, ii. 1.3.1.

In the early Saṃhitās Nārāyaṇa is described as a *ṛṣi* and a *devatā* and the guardian of the cosmos. This role of the deity, as human being as well as a god-head, led to the coining of the word *Puruṣa-Nārāyaṇa*.[2] In the Ṛg-Veda there appears to be no connection between Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu. Such a connection is met with for the first time in the *Maitrāyanī Saṃhitā* of the Black Yajur-Veda.[3] In one stanza, however, *Puruṣa* is used as the title of Rudra-Siva while Nārāyaṇa as the title of Viṣṇu. Thus we are presented with the following *Gāyatrī mantra* :

Tat Keśavāya vidmahe, Nārāyaṇāya dhīmahi
Tanno Viṣṇuḥ pracodayāt.

We know about Keśava; let us think about Nārāyaṇa :
May Viṣṇu stimulate this in us.

In the *Mahānārāyaṇa* Upaniṣad, assigned by competent scholars to the third century B.C.,[4] the above *Gāyatrī mantra* is modified as follows[5] :

Nārāyaṇāya vidmahe Vāsudevāya dhīmahi;
Tanno Viṣṇuḥ pracodayāt.

We know about Nārāyaṇa; let us think about Vāsudeva :
May Viṣṇu stimulate this in us.

The couplet shows the identification of Vāsudeva with Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu. In the Bhagavad-Gītā (2nd cen-

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[1] Keith, *op. cit.*, i. p. 111 f.
[2] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, xii. 3.4.1; xiii. 6.1.1; 2.12.
[3] ii. 9.1.
[4] Keith, *JRAS*, 1908, v. 171.
[5] Ch. i. Verse 31.

B.C.) the word Nārāyaṇa does not appear at all. Henceforward it is used as an adjective of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, who became the God *par excellence* of the Bhāgavata-Vaiṣṇava sect. The identification of Vāsudeva with Viṣṇu becomes further clear from the earliest available Vaiṣṇava epigraph, the Besnagar inscription of Heliodoros, which may be assigned to the last quarter of the second century B.C.[1] The inscription runs as follows :

Part I "This Garuḍa column of Vāsudeva, the god of gods, was erected here by Heliodoros, the Bhāgavata, the son of Dion and an inhabitant of Takṣaśilā, who came as a Greek (Yona) ambassador from the court of the great king Antialkidas (*Mahārājasa Aṃtalikitasa*) to king Kautsīputra Bhāgabhadra, the Saviour, then reigning prosperously in the fourteenth year of his kingship."

Part II "Three immortal precepts.. when practised lead to heaven,—self-restraint, charity and conscientiousness."

The above record points to some interesting facts about the state of Vaiṣṇavism in the second century B.C.;

(a) The Garuḍadhvaja of the Besnagar inscription, as H. C. Raychaudhuri states, undoubtedly points to the recognition by the Bhāgavatas of Vāsudeva's connection with Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu, for we learn from the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* that Gārutman was intimately associated with Viṣṇu, while such an idea is also conceived of in the pages of the Great Epic;[2]

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[1] Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 96.

[2] Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, pp. 102ff; Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, pp.22-3.

(b) It shows that Vāsudevism had been prevalent in Taxila among the Greeks and also at Besnagar, the ancient Vidiśā, where a temple of Bhagavat must have been in existence as proved by an inscription on the fragment of another pillar nearby;[1]

(c) As there was such a temple, we may presume that it must have contained an image of the god. In fact, some structural remains, unearthed by D. R. Bhandarkar, have been supposed to be the remnants of such a temple which may go back as early as *c.* 165 B.C.[2]

It is difficult to determine exactly how and when this Vāsudeva sect originated and came to the forefront. Its earliest reference is to be found possibly in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini. Thus in his *sūtra*, IV. 3. 95, Pāṇini states that an affix comes after a word in the first case in the construction in the sense of "*this is his object of bhakti*," while in IV. 3. 98 he states that in the same sense the affix '*vuñ*' comes after the words Vāsudeva and Arjuna. This shows that Pāṇini knew : (a) either two distinct sects, one following Vāsudeva and the other Arjuna; or (b) one single cult in which Arjuna was worshipped along with Vāsudeva. We have no evidence of the existence of an Arjuna sect in the later days. In the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta, we find the mention of a people called Arjunāyana, while from the evidence of the coins it is apparent that the land of the Arjunāyanas lay within the triangle Delhi-Jaipur-Agra.[3] Now from the account of Megasthenes it is clear that Heracles or Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa was specially worshipped in the Mathura region and this shows that the land of the Arjunāyanas included the region where the Vāsudeva cult prevailed, showing indirectly that the followers of the Arjuna cult regarded Vāsudeva also as one of their gods. This becomes clear from other evidences as well. Arjuna and Vāsudeva came to be identified with Nara and Nārāyaṇa respectively in the pages of the Great Epic. As R. G. Bhandarkar has observed : "Nara and Nārāyaṇa are sometimes called Ṛṣis, and that is probably to be traced to the conception of Nārāyaṇa as the Ṛṣi or composer of the *Puruṣasūkta*. These gods must have been very famous at the time when the Mahābhārata was composed since in the opening stanza of the different books obeisance is made to these two gods. In the Vanaparavan (2. 46. 47) Janārdana is represented to have said to Arjuna : 'O Invincible One, thou art Nara and I am Hari-Nārāyaṇa, and we, the sages Nara-Nārāyaṇa, have come to this world at the proper time; thou art not different from me, O Pārtha, and I am not different from thee; it is not possible to know any difference between us...' In this manner there are a good many examples of the identification of Arjuna and Vāsudeva with Nara and Nārāyaṇa. And thus the old tradition about the two Ṛṣis, who were warriors at the same time, was brought into connection with the two interlocutors of the Bhagavad-Gītā."[1] From this account it appears that Arjuna and Vāsudeva joined together to form one single cult.

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[1] Tarn, *GB.*, p. 406; *Contra* : Marshall, *Taxila*, vol. i. p. 37.

[2] *ASIR*, 1914-15, pp. 66f.

[3] Allan, *Catalogue*, p. lxxxiii.

J. Gonda interprets the account of Pāṇini in a different way. Thus he states : "Does this Grammatical rule imply, as Hopkins would have us believe, that Pāṇini" 'recognises the Arjuna-Kṛṣṇa cult ?' There is, as far as I am able to see, nothing in the context to warrant the conclusion that the great grammarian refers to a strictly religious cult only.

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[1] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism*, *Saivism* etc., pp. 46-7.

It is, moreover, in my opinion, not certain whether this *sūtra* proves that Arjuna and Vāsudeva formed, in Pāṇini's time, a pair or companions. These words were the only instances for the rule under discussion and it may be that this is the only reason why the grammarian mentions them together... Besides, how are we to know for certain that Pāṇini's Vāsudeva was already identified with Kṛṣṇa".[1] As, however, in the pages of the Great Epic, the kernel of which may be as old as the time of Pāṇini, or even older. Arjuna is always associated with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, and not with any other Vāsudeva—the Epic itself proves that there were Vāsudevas other than Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa (see *infra*)—we venture to differ from the interpretation offered by the much revered scholar.

In fact, we have to probe a little deeper to determine the cause of this association. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Arjuna is one of the secret names of Indra[2] and thus at the root of the close connection between Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna we may discern the relationship between Viṣṇu and Indra in the Ṛg-Veda. It may be noted here that in the Great Epic Arjuna has been described as the son of Indra. J. Gonda points out that in the Ṛg-Veda we have the statement *ahaśca Kṛṣṇaṃ ahar arjunaṃ ca*, "but it is difficult to see in it an allusion of association between the two epic heroes, unless we think that they are after all personifications of nature."[3]

While commenting on the *Sūtra* of Pāṇini, referred to above, Patañjali states that the word Vāsudeva does not denote a Kṣatriya but 'worshipful one.' This has led to much controversy among Indologists, but if we study the same in the back-ground of other available records we may possibly arrive at the following conclusions :

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[1] J. Gonda, *Early Viṣṇuism*, pp. 160f.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 160.
[3] J. Gonda, *l.c.* p. 159.

(a) that Vāsudeva, who was originally a human hero belonging to the Yādava race, has been transformed into a god by *c.* 150 B.C., the date of Patañjali;

(b) that there were other Vāsudevas belonging to the Kṣatriya race but they were not regarded as divine beings;

(c) that the Yādavas or the Sātvatas no more could claim that Vāsudeva was merely a human figure belonging to their family.

A critical study of the above points is necessary to understand the real character of Vāsudevism in the pre-Christian age. Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa's divinity rests on his identification with Viṣṇu on the one hand and with Nārāyaṇa on the other. H. C. Raychaudhuri, who has critically discussed this question, endeavoured to solve the problem why Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa came to be identified with Viṣṇu. Vāsudeva, like Viṣṇu, "always was a deliverer of mankind in distress and a great helper of other gods against the *asuras*. This feature, indeed, not only fitted him to be the centre of other famous *avatāras*, they made also acceptable the conception underlying the Rāma, Krishṇa, and Buddha avatāras : noble and heroic men who were great benefactors of mankind represent Viṣṇu".[1] Weber thinks that Vāsudeva mentioned in the Sūtra of Pāṇini was still a Kṣatriya hero and had not been deified or identified with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa.[1] In the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* also (*c*. 4th century B.C.) Viṣṇu is called Dāmodara and Govinda,[2] but not Vāsudeva. The statement of Megasthenes that the Indians assert that Heracles was born among them shows clearly that he was still a human figure. It was possibly in the third century B. C. that Vāsudeva, the Kṣatriya hero, came to be identified for the first time with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, as proved by the evidence of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*. The evidence of the Besnagar inscription, as already stated, shows clearly that Vāsudeva's identification with Viṣṇu has been fully recognised. This is also clearly hinted at in the Vanaparvan of the Epic where Arjuna states that Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa became Viṣṇu and pervaded the universe with three strides,[3] a clear reminiscence of the Ṛg-Vedic account of Viṣṇu :

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[1] In the second edition of his work *EHVS*, Dr. Raychaudhuri states : "Why was Krishṇa identified with Vishṇu and not with any other Vedic god ? Here in seeking to answer this question, there is full scope for the play of conjecture. The following facts seem to be indisputable. Vishṇu was connected from the earliest Vedic times with a work of deliverance for mankind in distress. He is always lauded as a great benefactor of mankind. He shows a disposition which is benevolent to all. He traversed the earth for a dwelling which he was desirous of bestowing on the primeval

> "*Trīṇipadā vicakrame Viṣṇurgopā adābhyaḥ*"
> (Ṛg-Veda, I. 22. 18)

In the Ṛg-Veda Nārāyaṇa is the name of a Ṛṣi and it is possibly for the first time in the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* that

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man (*Mānushe dasasyan*). The men who praise him are secure. Therefore he is lauded by the weak. He assumes different forms in battle. He is the unconquerable preserver who maintained *dharma*. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* we have the remarkable statement that 'men are Vishṇus'. In the *Aītareya Brāhmaṇa* and several other Vedic texts Vishṇu figures as the great helper of the gods against the Asuras. He assumed the form of a *dwarf* in order to recover the earth for the gods from the Asuras. All these characteristics of Vishṇu eminently fitted him to be the centre of the *avatāra* propounded in the *Bhagavadgīta*, iv. 8". (pp. 108-9). cf. J. Gonda, *l.c.* pp. 158-9.

[1] Weber, *Indian Literature*, p. 185 n.

[2] *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, ii. 5.24.

[3] *Mbh.* iii. 12.25-26. For an excellent interpretation of the "three strides", see. J. Gonda, *l.c.* pp. 55ff.

he has been deified, though he is not connected in any way with Viṣṇu. As H. C. Raychaudhuri points out, Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu are regarded as one and the same deity in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* and also in some earlier records,[1] but in the *Taittirīya Araṇyaka* and several passages of the Mahābhārata "they were originally names of distinct deities".[2] Now, *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* was composed in the pre-Mauryan age,[3] while the *Taittirīya Araṇyaka* is supposed to belong to the third century B.C. This shows that while a section of thinkers regarded the two deities as one and the same, another section refused to accept the identification. The complete identification of Nārāyaṇa with Viṣṇu became possible by several factors. In the *Taittirīya Araṇyaka*, Nārāyaṇa receives the name of Hari and this name is applied to Viṣṇu also in the pages of the Mahābhārata. S. N. Dasgupta thinks that Megasthenes coined the name Heracles, who, according to the Greek ambassador, was specially worshipped in the Sūrasena country from the epithet Hari applied to Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa in his time.[4] If we accept this view, then we may conclude that by the time of the first Mauryan emperor, the identification of three gods—Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa—with one another was a complete fact in some part of the country at least. Another factor, that helped in the identification of Viṣṇu with Nārāyaṇa, was the conception that water was the sweat of Nārāyaṇa, while according to common belief, Viṣṇu is associated with watery element of the universe.[1] Vāsudeva is also described as "*Toyātman*" and hence he also came to be identified with Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu. Another factor was the character of Nārāyaṇa as a kind and benevolent god acting in the interest of both mankind and universe. Viṣṇu is also described as possessing a similar character and hence the two came to be regarded as one and the same. Later on the achievement of Viṣṇu as pervading the three worlds with three strides was transferred to Nārāyaṇa to make the identification a complete one.

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[1] *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* and *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* (quoted *supra*, p. 28).

[2] Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, p. 111.

[3] Keith and other scholars opine that the *Baudhāyana Dh. S.* was composed *c.* 200 B.C. (*A History of Sanskrit Literature* p. 438). As in it Kaliṅga is described as a very impure country (*Padbhyām sa kurute pāpam ya kaliṅgān prapadyate*), while from the edicts of Aśoka we learn that many Brāhmaṇas and Sramaṇas were living there, it appears that the work was composed in the pre-Mauryan days, when the country of Kaliṅga had not been thoroughly aryanised.

[4] S. N. Das Gupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 543.

As the Mahābhārata has recorded traditions of different ages, we get various accounts of relationship between Vāsudeva and Nārāyaṇa. Thus in one place, Vāsudeva is only a hair of Nārāyaṇa,[2] while in another he is regarded as identical with Nārāyaṇa, the sage.[3] When, however, Vāsudeva is called "*Toyātman*", as already stated above, we may believe that the two have been identified. This is further proved by the evidence of the Besnagar inscription. The Ghosundi inscription of first century B.C. which records the installation of images of Vāsudeva and Saṃkarṣaṇa in a temple which has been named as Nārāyaṇa-vāṭaka is also very significant.[4]

Hopkins thinks that in the Māhābhārata there are verses which show definitely that Vāsudeva's identification with

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[1] *Mbh.* iii. 189. 7; K. K. Handiqui, *Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture*, p. 206.

[2] *Mbh.*, i. 197.33.

[3] *Ibid.*, i. 228-.20.

[4] Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 91-2; *Contra* : Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, pp. 109-10.

Nārāyaṇa was not accepted by all. Thus in the *Udyoga-parvan*, ch, vi., we find how Vāsudeva presented Duryodhana with soldiers who were *gopas* and labelled Nārāyaṇa and who opposed Arjuna with Vāsudeva in the battle-field. This, according to Hopkins, shows that the Nārāyaṇas must have been opponents of the Kṛṣṇa cult.[1] Though other interpretations of the account are also possible, the fact that the Nārāyaṇas are described as *gopas* is very interesting. It is not unlikely that the Nārāyaṇa cult was originally prevalent among the *gopas* and when the identification of Vāsudeva with Nārāyaṇa became an established fact, a new sub-sect of Vāsudevism, the Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa sect, gradually came into being. As, however, there is no archaeological evidence of the existence of the Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa sub-sect in the pre-Christian epoch, we reserve the treatment of the subject for the next chapter, though the cult itself may have been an earlier one.

From the aphorism of Patañjali referred to above, it would appear that there were originally more than one Vāsudeva. In the *Droṇaparvan*, ch. xxvii, of the Great Epic we find how Arjuna and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa were being opposed in the great battle-field at Kurukṣetra by ten thousand soldiers from the Trigarta country and four thousand others who called themselves *Vāsudevasya anugāḥ*. Hopkins thinks that this shows that there was "an older Vāsudeva's followers" who were opposed to the Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa cult.[2] Again, Kṛṣṇa gives the following description of the partition of Jarāsandha, the king of Magadha : "And he who was not formerly slain by one, has also taken the side of Jarāsandha—(I mean) the wicked man who is known as *Puruṣottama* among the Cedis, who in this world professes himself to be *Purṣottama*, who through infatuation continually assumes my mark—he, who is a powerful king among the Vaṅgas, Puṇḍras and Kirātas, and is celebrated in the world as the Vāsudeva of the Puṇḍras."[1]

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[1] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 214.

[2] *Ibid.*

The Epic thus shows that there were more than one Vāsudeva who claimed identification with Janārdana-Viṣṇu. This indirectly gives us also a clue to the state of struggle through which the Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa cult had to pass in its earlier days. The Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa sect evidently progressed by suppressing these rival *Vāsudevakas*.

The Sātvata-Vāsudeva is distinguished from other Vāsudevas by another name Kṛṣṇa. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* we find the statement that Ghora, the descendant of Aṅgirasa, "having declared this to Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī, said to him that (which when he heard), he became free from thirst (i.e. desire) viz., 'let a man at the time of his death have recourse to these three texts, *thou art the undecaying, thou art the unperishable, thou art the subtle principle of breath*".[2] In the Mahābhārata, and also in the Purāṇas, Vāsudeva is also called the son of Devakī, and teaches the same doctrine in the Gītā."[3]

In this connection, we may note the following remarks of the late R. P. Chanda :

> "According to the Brāhmaṇic, Bauddha and Jaina traditions, Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva was the chief of a warrior tribe, the Yādavas (Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas), who were Brāhmaṇist Kṣatriyas and in the Epic period represented the Ṛg-Vedic Yadus. But at Mathura and at Dvārakā (in the Kathiavar Peninsula) the Vṛṣṇis and the Andhakas lived amidst Abhīras and Saurāṣṭras,

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[1] Muir, *OST*, iv. p. 251.
[2] *Chāndogya* Up., iii. 17. 4.
[3] *Gītā*, xvi. 1.2.

who are said to have been outside the Brāhmaṇic pale. It may, therefore, be presumed that from the very outset Vāsudevism might have had two distinct phases, one Brāhmaṇic professed by the orthodox Brāhmaṇic tribes and castes, and the other un-Brāhmaṇic professed by the Abhīras and the Saurāṣṭras.

The un-Vedic or the un-Brāhmaṇic Pāñcarātra evidently grew out of the primitive worship of Saṃkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva and other Vṛṣṇi chiefs such as Vāsudeva's son Pradyumna, and his grandson Aniruddha as hero gods by the Barbarian Abhīras and Saurāṣṭras. The religion of the Bhagavad-Gītā, on the other hand, represents the orthodox phase of Vasudevism in its fully developed form. If we may assume any basis of fact in the Epic legends and traditions, we must believe that the worship of Vāsudeva as the founder of the religion of the Bhagavad-Gītā and the *Anu-Gītā* originated among the Vṛṣṇis, Andhakas and Kurus and was handed by them to the Sūrasenas".[1]

The above observation of R. P. Chanda is no doubt a very interesting one, showing that there were at least two different phases in the development of Vāsudevism, the earlier, the Aryan one, and the later in which we can detect many non-Brahmanical elements, though it is difficult to agree with the view that the later Pāñcarātra system developed under the influence of "the barbarian Abhīras and the Saurāṣṭras." As we shall see later on, the Abhīras had nothing to do with the Pāñcarātra sub-sect, which was developed more by inspiration from Central Asia, possibly during the time of the Kuṣāṇas.

As we have already seen Pāṇini refers to the joint cult of Vāsudeva and Arjuna. The next stage in the evolution of the Vāsudeva sect is marked by the dropping of Arjuna, and Vāsudeva being worshipped alone as the supreme god as proved by the evidence of the Besnagar inscription referred to before. In the next centuries we find Vāsudeva associated with Saṃkarṣaṇa or Baladeva, who is regarded in the Epic as his elder brother. An inscription of the pre-Christian epoch favours the above contention. Thus the Ghosundi stone inscription of king Sarvatāta states :[1]

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[1] Chanda, *Archaeology and Vaiṣṇava Tradition*, *MASI*, no. 5.

1. *(Kārito ayaṃ rājñā Bhāgava)(te) na Gājāyanena Pārāśarīputrena Sar—*
2. *(vatātena aśvamedha yā) jinā Bhagava(d) bhyāṃ Saṃkarṣaṇa-Vāsudevābhyāṃ.*
3. *(anihatābhyāṃ sarveśvarā)bhyāṃ pūjā-śīlāprākāro Nārāyaṇa-vāṭaka.*

The above record shows that in the second half of the first century B.C., one king Sarvatāta who had performed the horse-sacrifice, constructed a stone enclosure for the place of worship of the gods Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva called the Nārāyaṇa-Vāṭaka (or the house of Nārāyaṇa). The enclosure is supposed by the archaeologists to be the structure now known as Hatibada at Nagari. In the compound mentioning Saṃkarṣaṇa-Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa has evidently been given a higher rank than Vāsudeva as he is mentioned first. We find the same order also in the Nanaghat Cave inscription of the Sātavāhana queen Nāganikā of the beginning of first century A.D. (*Namo Saṃkarṣaṇa-Vāsudevānaṃ*).[2]

From the above discussions we can possibly trace the following stages in the rise of the Vāsudeva sect in the pre-Christian period :

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[1] Sircar, *Select Ins.*, pp. 91-2.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 186f.

(1) The sect originally centred round the Vṛṣṇi chief Vāsudeva, who came to be identified with the Vedic god Viṣṇu and the Ṛṣi-god Nārāyaṇa. At first it seems to have been confined to the Mathura region and later on spread to Saurāṣṭra when the Vṛṣṇi tribe migrated to that place. Hopkins pointed out that in the Mahābhārata also Kṛṣṇaism is represented as extending from Mathura to Surat.[1]

(2) In the time of Pāṇini (*c.* 5th century B.C.) the sect of Vāsudeva came to be coupled with that of Arjuna and was predominant in the region of Sūrasena at the time of Megasthenes.

(3) In the second century B.C., as proved by the Besnagar inscription of Heliodoros, the worship of Arjuna had been discontinued and Vāsudeva alone was regarded as the supreme god. The cult of Vāsudeva now had its followers in the Janapada of Vidiśā and in the Yavana kingdom of Taxila. The religion had now acquired a proselytizing character and foreigners were not only admitted into the fold but they also studied texts dealing with the cult of Vāsudeva, as proved by Part II of the Besnagar record mentioning *dama*, *tyāga* and *apramāda* of the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad-Gītā.[2]

(4) In the second half of the first century B.C. the cult of Vāsudeva introduced into itself the worship of Saṃkarṣaṇa along with Vāsudeva, and the former was given even a superior rank. In the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali (*c.* 150 B.C.) we find the statement that at the temples of Rāma and

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[1] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 217.

[2] *Gītā*, xvi. 1.3; *Mbh.*, v. 43.22; 45.7.

Keśava (Balarāma=Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa) musical instruments were sounded at the gatherings.[1] It is, however, not clear whether the two deities were worshipped together, as shown by the Ghosundi-Nanaghat records. According to Dr. V. S. Agrawala, a stone image of Balarāma belonging to the second century B.C., now preserved in the Lucknow Museum shows the prevalence of Saṃkarṣaṇa cult in the pre-Christian age. Patañjali in his *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇini II. 2. 23, states the following example : "*Saṃkarṣaṇadvitīyasya balaṃ Kṛṣṇasya vardhatām.*" This shows that by the middle of the second century B.C. Saṃkarṣaṇa had already been associated with Vāsudeva. The non-mention of Saṃkarṣaṇa in the Besnagar inscription shows evidently that it had not been the universal practice by that time.

The cults of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa had to face stubborn opposition from the Saivāites. Thus in the Great epic we find that Siśupāla, the devotee of Lord Siva, vilifies Kṛṣṇa, and his divine nature is disputed by Duryodhana, Karṇa and Salya.[2] In the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, it is clearly hinted that the story of Kṛṣṇa was the subject of dramatic representations, and as Weber points out, there were two such themes, *Balībandha* and *Kaṃsavadha*. Patañjali further states that while *Kaṃsavadha* was being played, there used to prevail great excitement, some taking the side of Kaṃsa and some of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa (*kecīt Kaṃsabhaktā bhavanti kecid Vāsudevabhaktāḥ*), and their faces became respectively red and black (*kecid raktamukhā bhavanti kecit*

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[1] *Mahābhāṣya*, on Pāṇini, ii. 2.34.
[2] *Mbh.*, ii. 41ff.

kālamukhāḥ).[1] In his *Kāśikāpadamañjarī*, Haradatta explains the account thus: "The narrators, who narrate *Kaṃsavadha* from a book, tell the story of Kaṃsa and others from their birth to their death. They (Kaṃsa and others), being described, appear as if visible in the minds of the audience. The minds of the audience are occupied by them. Therefore, they (the audience) take different sides, some turn partisans of Kaṃsa and others become partisans of Vāsudeva. They assume different colours also, some are red-faced, some are dark-faced."

The expressions *Kaṃśabhaktāḥ* and *Vāsudevabhaktāḥ* in the *Mahābhāṣya* are very significant, showing that there was a class of people who did not like the Vāsudeva cult, even as late as the second century B.C. Keith however, finds in the above account of the *Mahābhāṣya* a reference to a vegetation deity. Thus he says: "the mention of the colour of the two parties is most significant; red man slays black man; the spirit of spring and summer prevails over the spirit of dark winter. The parallel is too striking to be mistaken. We are entitled to say that in India, as in Greece, this primitive dramatic ritual of slaying of winter is the source whence the drama is derived".[2] Keith's theory has been thoroughly criticised by H. C. Raychaudhuri, who points out that in the above account there is absolutely "no allusion to the slaying of the black man by red man or the slaying of winter by the spirit of the spring and summer".[3] Indeed, Keith's theory is based on too much twisting of imagination. The drama was evidently enacted in the Gonarda region, where Patañjali lived, and there is no reason to think that in the western part of India winter is ever so much pinching as to be considered a demon, as it is done in Europe. J. Gonda rightly says : "A few words may also suffice with regard to the untenable doctrine professed by Keith, according to whom Kṛṣṇa originally was a vegetation demon and the contest between him and Kaṃsa a reflection of the battle between summer and winter and of the periodic slaying of the vegetation spirit. His far-fetched conclusions with regard to supposed original significance of this struggle for superiority and the connection of the early literary drama with the story of these two figures may be said to rest on misunderstandings and preconceived opinions to such a degree that it seems advisable not to make them an element in a discussion regarding the early history of the god Viṣṇu".[1]

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[1] *Mahābhāṣya*, iii. 1.26; cf. *JRAS*, 1908. pp. 172.3.
[2] *JRAS*, 1911, p. 1008.
[3] Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, p. 51.

Kaṃsa was a partisan of Siva and it is therefore quite probable that the *Kaṃsabhaktāḥ* refers to the Saivāites who were not well-disposed towards the cult of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. From a verse in the *Sabhāparvan* of the Mahābhārata it appears that a section of the orthodox Brāhmaṇists also did not like the cult.

The above discussions clearly show that the early growth of Vāsudevism was beset with difficulties. It had, therefore, to make alliance with other cults to maintain its existence. As we have seen, Pānini refers to the joint cult of Vāsudeva and Arjuna and later on, Arjuna became dropped while Saṃkarṣaṇa became associated with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. R. G. Bhandarkar may be right that Saṃkarṣaṇa or Baladeva was originally a god outside the Vaiṣṇava pantheon. P. C. Bagchi thinks that in Dionysios of Megasthenes we find many elements that belonged to Saṃkarṣana cult.[2] If we accept this theory then we have to believe that originally Saṃkarṣaṇa like Dionysios was also worshipped in the hill region. Whatever the case may be, we find that in the second century B.C. the followers of Vāsudeva took within their fold the cult of Saṃkarṣaṇ aand the latter came to be regarded as Vāsudeva's elder brother. In the *Adiparvan* of the Mahābhārata, Saṃkarṣaṇa-Baladeva is represented as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, like Vāsudeva, and both are represented as heirs of Nārāyaṇa.[1] In the *Anuśasanaparvan* we get the following interesting account of Baladeva :

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[1] J. Gonda, *l.c.*, pp. 157-8.

[2] K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, ed., *The Age of the Nandas and the Mauryas*, p. 306.

> "He (Vāsudeva) will have an elder brother who will be known all over the world by the name of Bala. Having a plough for his weapon, in form he will look like a 'White Hill.' In fact, he will be gifted with strength capable of uplifting entire earth.
>
> "The head of that mighty-armed hero, that Lord of all the worlds, will be covered with many huge snakes. All weapons of attack and defence will also come to him as soon as he will think of them.
> "Supporting the entire earth on his head, he lives in the nether regions. He roves through the universe as Seṣa, filled with great joy.
> "He is Viṣṇu, he is the illustrious Ananta, he is the supporter of the earth. He, who is Rāma, is Hṛṣikeśa. He who is Achyuta, is Ananta, the bearer of the earth".[2]

From the above description it will appear that the god Saṃkarṣaṇa had plough as one of his weapons, is associated with snakes and is identified with Seṣa and Ananta. J. Gonda thinks that the "Club and plough point to association with agriculture and with the fertility of the soil",[1] a fact which seems to connect him with Dionysios as stated before. The snakes, on the other hand, show that he was a deity of the Nāga cult at the same time, or had absorbed in himself the influences of Nāga worship. Vāsudeva's association with him shows evidently how the Nāga cult was being indirectly associated with the rising cult of Kṛṣṇa.

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[1] *Mbh.*, i. 197.33.

[2] *Mbh.*, xiii. 147.55, 57-58, 60.

It now appears that snake worship in India is as early as the days of Mohenjo-daro. If the theory that some of the Aryan invaders specially the Bharatas, bore hatred against the pre-historic Indus people be accepted, then we can easily explain why snake-god (Ahivrtra) was looked down upon as an evil spirit. Later on, possibly in the later Vedic age, snake cult formed a place in the Aryan pantheon, while the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* seems to suggest the existence of a priestly class connected with the cult.[2]

Side by side there seems to have been a non-Aryan cult of snake-worship, for even at the present time we find that there are no less than thirty snake-tribes, while the Kolarian Nāga tribes of Chota Nagpur not only had till late three snakes as its battle-emblem, but built a serpent-temple.

In the Mahābhārata we find that the serpents with seven heads and poison—looks guard the 'White Mountain',[3] while in the *Ādiparvan* poison of snakes is stated to neutralise vegetable poison.[4] We may compare this with the description of Baladeva quoted above, which states that "in form he will look like a 'White Hill'" while his *āyudha*

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[1] For Viṣṇu's association with fertility, cf. J. Gonda, *l.c.* pp. 11ff.

[2] Vide *PIHC*; 1939, p. 226.

[3] *Mbh.*, iii. 225.11.

[4] *Ibid.*, i. 128.57.

hala seems to be connected with the vegetable cult. In the Rāmāyaṇa we find description of "serpents having the form of god"[1] showing how the Nāga cult was gradually being held in respect by the followers of the Vaiṣṇava sect.

The Vāsudeva sect evidently absorbed the god Saṃkarṣaṇa with great advantage. We have already seen that the Kurus were originally hostile to the cult and evidently the introduction of the new god was meant to win them over to its side. As Hopkins points out, both the Kurus and the Pañcālas were Nāga clans, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Airāvata and Dhanañjaya were Vedic Nāgas.[2] Coins show that in the first century B.C. the Vaiṣṇava cult had penetrated into the Pañcāla country. Allan has traced the figure of Viṣṇu (Vāsudeva ?) on the coins of the Pāñcāla king Viṣṇumitra.[3] The figure of Viṣṇu (?), Allan states "differs from the usual type in having both arms raised; in his left arm he holds a circular object (? a discus). He is not represented as four-armed as has been suggested. His robes hanging down give this effect, which is found in other representations of deities with uplifted arms, e.g., Agni and Indra also. Four arms would come from the shoulders and not from the elbows." As the god has two arms with a discus, we are inclined to think that he is Vāsudeva and not Viṣṇu, for the latter is usually represented with four arms. In this connection we may note that on some tribal coins of the Himalayan State of Almora of second century B.C., we find the name Haridatta, showing that Heracles-Vāsudeva had got a foot-hold in the dominion of Dionysios, As pointed out by Sri K. G. Goswami, some of the Kanauj coins contain the name Viṣṇudeva, while among the

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[1] *Rāmāyaṇa*, v. 1.6.

[2] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 24.

[3] Allan, *l.c.* pp. cxvi, 131.

Mathura coins the names Viṣṇumitra and Rāmadatta are found.[1]

Early Vāsudevism was thus pre-eminently a religion of synthesis. It is thus no wonder that this spirit should pervade the Bhagavad-Gītā (*c.* 3rd. century B.C.), the Gospel of the early Vāsudevism. In the Gītā we find *Karma*, *Yoga*, *Jñāna* and *Bhakti*, i.e., all the different forms of Sādhanā synthesised together, though special stress is laid on *Bhakti* on the one hand and *Jñāna* and *Karma* on the other. Indeed, "two things strike us in our perusal of the Gītā : (i) the repeated declaration that *Bhakti* can attain the highest and that those who are attached to God are best united to the godhead; and (ii) that *Karma* should not be given up and may exist simultaneously with *Jñāna*. The way in which these two views are supported clearly indicates that the Gītā was depending and advocating especially the cause of *Bhakti* and *Karma*, both of which had been neglected in the Upaniṣadic age. The Gītā was clearly fighting against the mistaken view that had sprung up, *viz.* (i) that the realisation of the *Bhakti* form of *Sādhanā* was inferior to that of the *Jñāna* line; (ii) that *Karma* should be given up, being incompatible with *Jñāna*".[2] In a brochure dealing mainly with the historical development of the sects, we need not enter into the intricacies of the philosophical doctrines, but may only state that the Gītā acted as the foundation-stone of the later development of Vāsudevism. Thus in Canto IV we read :

> "Though I am the unborn, though I am imperishable in my self-existence, though I am the Lord of all existences, yet I stand upon my own Nature and I come into birth by my self-Māyā. (6) Whenso-

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[1] K. G. Goswami, *SV*, p. 9.

[2] N. K. Brahma, *Philosophy of Hindu Sādhanā*, p. 315.

> ever there is the fading of the *Dharma* and the uprising of unrighteousness, then I loose myself forth to birth. (7) For the deliverance of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the enthroning of the Right, I am born from age to age. (8)

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> "The four-fold order was created by me according to the divisions of quality and active function. Know Me for the doer of these (the four-fold law of human workings) who am yet the imperishable non-doer."(13)

We find the influence of the above doctrine of the Gītā in the rise of the theory of Avatārahood in later Vaiṣṇavism. This Avatāra theory enabled the followers of the cult to absorb the great religious preachers of India like the Buddha on the one hand and the important divinities of the rival cults on the other. Again the doctrine of caste-system, as preached in Verse 13 above, was fundamentally different from one prevailing in the then Brāhmaṇical society which laid emphasis on birth as the fundamental basis of the *Varṇāśrama dharma.* The liberal view propounded by the Gītā led the Vaiṣṇavas of the later days to ignore the so-called orthodox caste-system. All Vaiṣṇavas, they think, are equal, there being no difference between an ordinary Bhāhmaṇa and a Sūdra. In Chap. IX, verse 32, the Gītā declares : "Those who take refuge with Me, O Pārtha, though out-caste, born from a womb of sin (*Pāpayonayaḥ*), women, Vaiṣyas, even Sudras, they also attain to the highest goal". Thus Vaiṣṇavism became a democratic religious movement, and herein lay the germ of its future glory and success.

The question naturally arises, why of all gods Viṣṇu became specially associated with the *bhakti* form of sādhanā ? In Saivism, there is, no doubt, some *bhakti* element but there the *yoga* plays the predominant part. *Bhakti* presupposes the theory of divine grace, and naturally the character of Viṣṇu as a liberal and beneficient god made him eminently suited for devotion. It may be pointed out in this connection that fortune of almost any more or less wealthy man in ancient India mainly consisted of cattle, and as Viṣṇu is variously described as Govinda etc., naturally he became the god of special devotion.

CHAPTER II

The Pāñcarātra Sub-Sect

From the available archaeological evidences it appears that in the opening centuries of the Christian era, Mathura was one of the centres of Bhāgavata or Vaiṣṇava cult, though Jainism and the Nāga cult existed there side by side.[1] Two inscriptions from the Mora Well of the time of Soḍāsa refer to the cult of Vāsudeva. One of them mentions the *mahāsthāna* of the god, showing that there was a temple where the image of Vāsudeva was worshipped. Soḍāsa appears to have been a devotee of the god or at least "influenced by the cult of Vāsudeva." Two figures of Kṛṣṇa-Govardhanadhara from Mathura and the name of the last Imperial Kuṣāṇa king as Vāsudeva point further to the influence of the religion in the ancient *janapada* of Śūrasena. These evidences show that the old Vāsudeva sect as well as the Pāñcarātra and Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa sub-sects flourished in the same place in the early centuries of the Christian era.

In the pre-Christian epoch besides Mathura other centres of Vaiṣṇavism were Nagri, Chitorgad Dist., Rajasthan, Vidiśā in the state of M. P. and Ahicchatra[2] or the

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[1] *Ep. Ind*, xxiv, pp. 194ff; for inscriptions referring to the Nāga cult, Luders. nos., 52a, 63, 85; of 132 inscriptions from Mathura mentioned in Luders' *List*, 84 are Jain.

[2] V. S. Agrawala : "*The Terra Cottas of Ahicchatra*" in Ancient India no. 4.

Pañcāla country corresponding to the present Rohilkhand in the U. P. In the early centuries of the Christian era Vaiṣṇavism also flourished in these areas. Thus we have got several terracotta figurines showing how the cult of Vāsudeva was popular in Ahicchatra, while from Tumlin an imposing figure of Balarāma of 2nd-3rd century has come to light.[1] Further, an ancient building "decorated with beautiful and interesting carvings representing some incidents of the life of Kṛṣṇa" has been discovered at the same place.

It is also believed that Vaiṣṇavism first entered Bengal during this period. The earliest definite reference to the cult is, however, found in the Susunia inscription which describes king Candravarman as a devotee of Cakrasvāmin, a name of Viṣṇu.[2] If the figure of a four-armed Viṣṇu in red sandstone discovered in the district of Maldah, and now preserved in the Varendra Museum at Rajsahi,[3] can be ascribed to the Kuṣāṇa period, then it may be believed that Vaiṣṇavism first entered Bengal during the Scytho-Kuṣāṇa age.

It has already been noted that the Nanaghat inscription of queen Nāyanikā refers to the worship of Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva. Further extension of Vaiṣṇavism in the south is proved by China inscription of the Sātavāhana king Yajñaśrī Śātakarṇi.

In the closing centuries of the pre-Christian age Vāsudeva became associated with his elder brother

[1] *ASIR*, 1918-19, pp. 21-22, Pl. XIII, (a)

[2] King Candravarman of the Susunia record has generally been identified with king Candra mentioned in the Allahabad record of Samudra Gupta. But the identification seems to be wrong. Candravarman appears to have ruled just before the rise of the Guptas, *EHNI.*, pp. 128ff, 157.

[3] *Journal of the Department of Letters*, xxx, Early Sculptures of Bengal, fg. 2, as quoted by K. G. Goswami, EV. p.13.

Saṃkarṣaṇa-Baladeva in the Vaiṣṇava pantheon and the votaries worshipped the two gods together. In the opening centuries of the Christian era there arose a new sub-sect, the Pāñcarātras, that included other members of the Vṛṣṇi family in the pantheon and this was evidently the logical outcome of Vāsudeva-Saṃkarṣaṇa worship. Thus from the Mora Well, about 7 miles west of Mathura, an inscription has been discovered belonging to the time of the Śaka chief Soḍāsa, who ruled in the first quarter of the first century A. D., recording the installation of the images of the *Pañcavīras* of the Vṛṣṇis in a stone temple by a lady named Tosā.[1] Luders indentifies the Pañcavīras thus : (1) Baladeva, (2) Akrura, (3) Anādhṛṣṭi, (4) Saraṇa and (5) Viduratha. J. N. Banerjea with the help of the *Vāyu Purāṇa* text has shown that the Pañcavīras were Saṃkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva, Pradyumna, Śāmba and Aniruddha.

The worship of the family members of Vāsudeva was thus a new feature of Vaiṣṇavism and this was followed mainly by the Pāñcarātras. This sub-sect, however, worshipped Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Śāmba had no place in the Pāñcarātra pantheon, and he became associated with the Sun-cult, as we shall see later on.

Saṃkarṣaṇa, as we have already seen, was possibly originally a Nāga god and in the Saṃkarṣaṇa-Vāsudeva worship we find the first trace of the fusion of the Nāga sect with the Vaiṣṇavas. It is not unlikely that Pradyumna and Aniruddha were originally gods of minor independent sects which were gradually merging with the votaries of the Vāsudeva cult. The Epic states that Saṃkarṣaṇa-Balarāma was Kṛṣṇa's brother, Pradyumna his son and

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[1] *Ep. Ind.* xxiv, pp. 194f.

Aniruddha one of his grandsons. Farquhar has aptly remarked that "it is probable that these three were local divinities, and then an arrangement was made to bring them into relation with Kṛṣṇa, so as to form a combined sect.[1]" In any case we find in Vaiṣṇavism a belief that the Supreme Reality often divided himself into four parts. Thus Bhīṣma says in the Mahābhārata : "I heard it from my father that in the golden age, O King, during the epoch of self-created Manu, the eternal Nārāyaṇa, the soul of the universe, was born as the son of Dharma in a quadruple form, namely, Nara, Nārāyaṇa Hari and the self-created Kṛṣṇa.[2]" In the Rāmāyaṇa also we get almost a parallel account inasmuch as it is stated that the Supreme Reality became divided into four forms, Rāma, Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa and Śatrughna.

According to the Pāñcarātras Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha formed together what is known as *vyūha*. Discarding the Epic account of the mutual relationship of these divinities this sub-sect believed that from Vāsudeva sprang Saṃkarṣaṇa, from Saṃkarṣaṇa Pradyumna and from Pradyumna Aniruddha. It may be noted here that while in the pre-Christian age Saṃkarṣaṇa was given a higher position than Vāsudeva, in the *vyūha* doctrine he is certainly inferior to his brother. Now, it is difficult to determine what the exact connotations of the terms Pāñcarātra and *vyūha* are. Schrader remarks that the name Pāñcarātra came from the central dogma which was the *Pāñcarātrasatra* of Nārāyaṇa interpreted philosophically as "the five-fold self-manifestations of god by means of his *Parā*, *Vyūha*, *Vibhava*, *Antaryāmī* and *Arcā* forms[3]." The term *vyūha*, on the other hand, as Grierson points out, means the phases of creation or evolution, and has intimate connection with the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system. "The Adorable, who in this connection is usually called Vāsudeva, is represented as passing in succession through three *vyūhas* or phases of conditioned spirit. Vāsudeva first produces from himself Prakṛti, the indiscrete primal matter of the Sāṃkhyas, and at the same time passes into the phase of conditioned spirit known as Saṃkarṣaṇa. From the association of Saṃkarṣaṇa with Prakṛti there springs *manas*, corresponding to the Sāṃkhya *buddhi*, or the intellectual faculty and at the same time Saṃkarṣaṇa passes into the phase of conditioned spirit known as Pradyumna. From the association of Pradyumna with *manas* springs the Sāṃkhya *ahaṃkāra* or consciousness, while Pradyumna passes into a tertiary phase of conditioned spirit known as Aniruddha. From *ahaṃkāra* and Aniruddha spring the Sāṃkhya *mahābhūtas*, or grosser elements, with their respective qualities, and also the deity Brahmā, who from the elements fashions the earth and all that it contains[1]."

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[1] Farquhar, *l.c.* pp. 98f.

[2] *Mbh*, xii. 335.8-9.

[3] Schrader, *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra* (Madras, 1916), p. 25.

The Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata, which can be assigned to the early centuries of the Christian era, contains perhaps the earliest literary references regarding the Pāñcarātras. It asserts that there was a Pāñcarātra scripture which was composed by seven ṛṣis, "who passed by the name of Citraśikhaṇḍins" and who "uniting together on the breast of that foremost of mountains viz., Meru, promulgated an excellent work on duties and observances which were consistent with the four Vedas. The contents of that work were uttered by seven mouths and formed the best compendium of human duties and observances. Known, as already stated, by the name of

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

Citraśikhaṇḍins, those seven ṛṣis formed the seven elements, and the self-born Manu who is the eighth in number forming the original Nature. These eight keep up the universe, and it was these eight who promulgated the treatise referred to.[1]"

The above statement that the Pāñcarātra code was promulgated on Mount Meru is indeed interesting. The Meru has been identified with the Pamir and thus it shows that the Pāñcarātras got some inspiration from the Central Asiatic region and this was only possible in the Kuṣāṇa age when Central Asia formed a part of the empire of Kaniṣka I. In another passage, the Epic, however, states that "the illustrious Nārāyaṇa is himself the promulgator of the religion contained in the Pāñcarātra scriptures.[2]"

Side by side with the doctrine of *vyūha*, the Nārāyaṇīya section records a parallel doctrine, the doctrine of *avatāras*. The theory is possibly based on the statement of the *Gītā* that the Lord would appear in this world to establish *dharma* whenever there would be an increase of sin.[3] Archaeological evidences, however, show that the doctrine became a popular one in the time of the Guptas. This leads us to infer that though the Brāhmaṇas preached the theory at the beginning of the Christian age it took some time to establish its hold on the common people. In the Nārāyaṇīya section we have the following account of the ten *avatāras* :—

> "Appearing in the forms of a swan, a tortoise, a fish, O foremost of twice-born ones, I shall then appear as a boar, then as a man-lion, then as a dwarf, then as Rāma of Bhṛgu's race, then as Rāma, the son

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[1] *Mbh*, xii. 336.27-30.
[2] *Mbh*, xii. 340.107.
[3] *Gītā*, iv. 7.

of Daśaratha, then as Kṛṣṇa, the scion of the Sātvata race and lastly as Kalki."[1]

In the same section of the Epic, there are, however, accounts which give the numbers of *avatāras* as six or four. This shows that this theory was still in its fluid stage and as in the later works generally the number is given as ten, twelve or eighteen, among which we find the mention of the Buddha even, it may be assumed that the theory was not a fixed one and the devotees of Vāsudeva or the Pāñcarātras had no particular notion about the subject.

A critical study shows that in this theory of *avatāra* we find the admixture of several earlier conceptions mixed up with the theology centring round Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu. Thus Jacobi has divided the *avatāras* into three groups :—

(a) those developing from the mythical feats of Viṣṇu frequently mentioned in the Ṛg-Veda;

(b) those developing from the legends centring round Prajāpati in earlier literature;

(c) those developing from the feats of heroes having originally no connection with Viṣṇu.[2]

Thus the Vāmana or dwarf incarnation is nothing but the account of Viṣṇu measuring the three worlds with three strides related in the Ṛg-Veda (*supra*, p. 34). The Kūrma or tortoise, the Matsya or fish etc. came from the exploits of Prajāpati. As it has been said : "Prajāpati is frequently represented as taking one form or other for some special purpose; in our case the reason for his being assumed to have taken the form of a tortoise or of a boar may have been that his primitive worship had been of a theriomorphic character, at least with some classes of the people. When Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) became the supreme deity, the creator and the lord of the world, he stepped into the place of Prajāpati, the creator in the period of the *Brāhmaṇas*, and the deeds of Prajāpati were transferred to Viṣṇu.[1]" Thus in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is stated that Prajāpati created offsprings assuming the form of a tortoise :—"That which he created, he made; hence the word Kūrma. Kaśyapa means tortoise; hence men say 'all creatures are descendants of Kaśyapa.' This tortoise is the same as Âditya."[2] As regards the boar-incarnation we may similarly note the following account of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* :—"She 'the Earth' was formerly so large etc.; for formerly, this Earth was only so large, of the size of a man. *Emusha*, a boar, raised her up. Her lord, the Prajāpati, in consequence, prospers him (the boar) with love and object of his desire and makes him complete.[3]" In the legend of the Deluge, as recorded in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Manu was saved by a fish and the Mahābhārata identifies that fish with Brahmā Prajāpati.

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[1] *Mbh.* xii. 340.100.

[2] *ERE*, vii. pp. 193-4.

The incarnation of Narasiṃha or the Man-lion stands by itself but it may be noted in this connection that the legend of Viṣṇu killing Hiraṇyakaśipu in the form of man-lion "is once alluded to in the Vedic literature, viz., *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, x. 1.6." (Jacobi).[4]

The three incarnations, Paraśurāma, Rāma-Dāśarathī and Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, evidently came to be regarded as *avatāras* when their identification with Viṣṇu became an established fact. We have already seen that Kṛṣṇa's identification with Viṣṇu is proved by the Besnagar inscription of Heliodoros. Rāma, son of Daśaratha, on the other hand, is described as a human hero in the earlier portion of the Rāmāyaṇa but in a later passage, near the end of the original work, occurs a chapter describing how Sītā entered the fire when the gods appeared and Brahmā declared Rāma to be Nārāyaṇa.[1] The case of Paraśurāma appears to be a somewhat interesting one. Most of the human heroes who have been regarded as *avatāras* are Kṣatriyas, but Paraśurāma was a Brāhmaṇa and an enemy of the Kṣatriya race. His inclusion in the list evidently shows that he was originally a hero-god of some Brāhmaṇical group and when Vāsudeva worship overstepped the limits of the Sātvata clan and the Brāhmaṇas recognised him as a god and an incarnation of Viṣṇu, there was a rapprochement and Paraśurāma also came to be regarded as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu.

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 7.4.3.5.

[3] *Ibid.*, 14. 1.2.11.

[4] *ERE*, vii, *l.c.*

The Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata has recorded a curious story—the story of Nārada's voyage to Śvetadvīpa[2]—which has been discussed by the Indologists as showing the influence of Christianity on the Vāsudeva cult. Whatever may be the significance of the account, as it is given in connection with the description of the Pāñcarātras, it may be assumed that the sub-sect believed in the inner meaning of the theme. The details of the story are full of myths and fancy and what is important for us to note in it is the fact that Bṛhaspati is informed that the god Nārāyaṇa-Hari can only be seen by those on whom he shows his grace and who are his *bhaktas*. He cannot be propitiated by means of worship performed according to the injunctions of the *śāstras* only. Nārāyaṇa-Hari, it is further stated, lives in the White-Island surrounded by *bhaktas*. An account is also given of Nārada's visit to that Island and his success in seeing the god.

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[1] *Ibid.* p. 194. fn. 1.

[2] *Mbh*, xii. 366ff.

Attempts have been made to cull from the above account the following facts :—

(a) that the concept of *bhakti* and God's grace in the above account shows the influence of Christian doctrines;

(b) that the White Island is nothing but the habitat of the fair-complexioned Christians wherefrom the inspiration of *Devotion* and *Grace* came.

It may be noted here that the conception of *bhakti* is very old in India. In the sense of 'love directed to God' the word appears in the Buddhist works of the 5th century B. C. and also finds prominent mention in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini (iv. 3.95). In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* which may be assigned to the second century B. C. it is fully established as a religious technical term. So it is difficult to agree with the view that the cult of *bhakti* was a gift of Christianity to India.

Śvetadvīpa or White Island has been identified by Lassen with Parthia, while Dr. Seal thinks that it was Asia Minor or Egypt. It is surmised that in some such country where Christianity was strong some Indians may have gone and learnt from the inhabitants of the place Christian ideas which may have been incorporated later on in the Pāñcarātra tradition. The evidences of the Epic, however, confirm that the so-called White Island was to the north of Pamir (Meru), possibly somewhere in Central Asia.[1] The Nestorian Christianity entered Central Asia not earlier than the 7th century A. D.; hehce it is difficult to agree with the view that the Śvetadvīpa refers to a place inhabited by the Christians. In this connection we may note the following remarks of de la Vallee Poussin :—

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[1] *Ibid.*, 336. 7-8.

"Amongst Vaiṣṇavite paradises, the Cow-world (*Goloka*) and the *Vaikuṇṭha*—a kingdom in the Northern Ocean (compare the Hyperboreans), or on the eastern peak of mount Meru (compare the heaven of Indra and the Thirty-three)—are more celebrated in later times than the Śvetadvīpa, 'White Island'— 'a sort of Atlantis situated in the extreme North, beyond the Sea of Milk' (Barth, Religions, p. 193), well known from the Mahābhārata, inhabited by monotheistic saints very like the future Bodhisattvas of Amitābha's paradise. In all these peaceful abodes the Blessed enjoy the vision and the actual presence of their god, the successive degrees or savours (*rasa*) of devotion, friendship, filial affection, ecstatic susceptibility.[1]"

From the above observation it is quite clear that the Nārāyaṇīya section has drawn its inspiration from the Mahāyāna Buddhists of Central Asia and consequently it would possibly be not improper to infer that we can trace some amount of Mahāyāna influence on the Pāñcarātra sub-sect. This was evidently possible in the age of the Kuṣāṇas.

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[1] *ERE*, ii. p. 688n.

CHAPTER III

The Pāñcarātra sub-sect

(Continued)

The Pāñcarātra system as enjoined in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Great Epic emphasised on the worship of the *vyūhas* and maintained the theory of incarnation or *avatāras*. In Vaiṣṇavism of the fourth century onwards we find the spread of the worship of the *avatāras* mainly, but there is no archaeological reference to the *vyūha* system. H. C. Raychaudhuri has observed that the archaeological disappearance of the worship of the *vyūhas* excepting Vāsudeva was perhaps one of the first fruits of the growing popularity of the *avatāras*.[1]

The worship of the Boar incarnation (Varāha) was the most popular form of Vaiṣṇavism in the Gupta period. As K. G. Goswami points out "instances of the devotion to Viṣṇu in his Varāha form have come from different places of the country viz., :—Udayagiri (*c*. 400 A. D.), Bhitargaon (near Cawnpore U. P.) (5th century A. D.), Damodarpur (Bengal) (5th century A. D.) and Eran (C. P.) (*c*. 5th-6th centuries A. D.)[2]." It will be seen that only one instance hails from the Madhyadeśa region, showing evidently that the cult was not very popular there.

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[1] *EHVS*, p. 176.

[2] K. G. Goswami, *SV*. p. 46.

Two forms of the Boar incarnations were adopted in this period : (a) a man with a boar's head, (b) or a real boar as at Khoh. In the Damodarpur inscription, there is the mention of the *Śvetavarāha-svāmin*, while the Eran Inscription of the time of Toramāna refers to *Deva-varāha mūrti* for whom a stone temple was built by Dhanyaviṣṇu the ruler of Airakiṇa or modern Eran.

Next to the Boar incarnation, the worship of Nṛsiṃha also became a popular feature in the Gupta age. Thus a terra cotta sealing with the figure of Nṛsiṃha inscribed on it has been discovered from Basarh in the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar,[1] while another figure of the god carved in sand-stone, and originally set up at Besnagar, is now preserved in the Gwalior Museum. It has been assigned by Coomaraswamy and others to *c*. 6th century A. D. The worship of this god gradually grew up in popularity and there ultimately arose a Nṛsiṃha sub-sect at a later period. This is proved clearly by the *Nṛsiṃha-tāpanīya Upaniṣads* which cannot be dated later than the seventh century. In fact, they appear to be somewhat earlier. Both the *Nṛsiṃha-pūrva-tāpanīya* and the *uttaratāpanīya* were expounded by Gauḍapāda, the *guru* of the great Śaṁkarācārya. In both these sects we can clearly discern Tāntric elements showing how gradually Tāntricism was expanding its sway over Vaiṣṇavism, or showing indirectly how Vaiṣṇava sect was now gradually adopting Tāntric practices. The devotees of this cult practise the sectarian *mantra* in *anuṣṭubh* verse called the *mantrarāja* of Nṛsiṃha which is accompanied by four ancillary *mantras*. The sectarian laws enjoin that if the Nṛsiṃha diagram—clearly a Tāntric one,—is carried by a devotee he becomes free from all dangers. Even at the present time Nṛsiṃha sub-sect can be found in South India where Nṛsiṃha is the god of many families.[1]

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[1] *ASIR*, 1913-14, p. 133.

Other incarnations appear to have been less popular in the period and so there cannot be any question of the rise of any sub-sect around any of them. At Kaman, in the Bharatpur state, there is a fragment bearing the figures of Fish, Tortoise, Boar,man-lion and Dwarf incarnations. The Dwarf incarnation is also indirectly referred to in the Junagadh inscription of Skanda Gupta where we find the reading "*Śriyaṃ...tridaśapati-sukhārthaṃ yo Balerājahāra.*[2]"

Thus if the archaeological evidences are to be believed, the worship of *avatāras*, which was a special feature of the Pāñcarātra sect, came to the forefront in the age of the Guptas. This does not imply, however, that the worship of the *vyūha* was completely dispensed with, for though we have no direct archaeological evidences, the different Pāñcarātra tests bear witness to this fact. Schrader thinks that most of the Pāñcarātra texts of North India were composed before *Saṃkarācārya*, after whom the texts were compiled mainly in the South. The early texts deal with the following topics which would throw considerable light on the practices followed by the sect :—

"The ideal Pāñcarātra *Saṃhitā*, like the Śaiva *Āgamas*, is said to consist of four 'quarters' (*pāda*) teaching respectively (1) *Jñāna*, knowledge; (2) *Yoga*, concentration; (3) *Kriyā*, making; and (4) *Caryā*, doing. By *making* is meant everything connected with the construction and conservation of temples and images, and by *doing*, the religious and social observances (daily rites, festivals, *varṇāśrama dharma*).[3]" Like the Pāśupata Śaivas, the

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[1] Farquhar, *l.c.* p. 188.

[2] Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 300.

[3] Schrader, *l.c.* p. 22.

Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇavas thus came under the *Yoga* system, but they observed the caste-system like the followers of the *Pāśupata Sūtras*. On this point, the Pāñcarātrins, however, differ from the other Vaiṣṇavas, especially of the later day *Gauḍiya* Vaiṣṇavas who do not follow strictly the rules of castes. Speaking of these four divisions, *Jñāna-pāda*, *Yoga-pāda*, *Caryā-pāda*, and *Kriyā-pāda*, Govindācārya has rightly observed : "It will be seen from this division that the first two divisions contribute the theoretical, and the second two the practical, side of the Bhāgavata religion. From another standpoint the former half deals with abstract or inner worship, and the latter half with concrete or outer worship."[1]

It is really difficult to determine how many of the *Saṃhitās* can be ascribed to the period with which we are dealing here. Śaṃkara's statement about Śāṇḍilya, *Bhāṣya* II, ii, 45, in all probability, rests on a *Saṃhitā*. This shows that some of the Pāñcarātra texts can safely be assigned to our period, and even which are of later date contain traditions of practices that may have been current in the earlier period. The following extract quoted from Farquhar's work would give an idea of the Pāñcarātra practices :—

> "The *Saṃhitās* are historically noteworthy in two ways. They made first the emergence of Śākta Tāntric principles in the Vaiṣṇava sect. But they are also notable as being the first manuals formed to express both the beliefs and practices of Vaiṣṇavas. In the matter of practice they are as it were the *Kalpasūtras* of the Vaiṣṇavas...The theology of the chief *Saṃhitās* is essentially a development of the teaching of the Nārāyaṇa episode of the Epic with the addition of a

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[1] *JRAS*, 1911, p. 952.

considerable Śākta Tāntric element. The basis of the philosophy is the theistic *Yoga*.[1]"

In some of the branches of the sub-sect, however, the *yoga* element was not a very predominant one. This becomes clear from the definition of the term Pāñcarātra given in the *Padma-Tantra* :—

> "Because the five other great *Śāstras* are like darkness in the presence of this (Pāñcarātra), thence it is currently known by the term Pāñcarātra."

The other five Śāstras are....

(1) *Yoga* (author Viriñca or Hiraṇyagarbha)
(2) *Sāṃkhya* (author Kapila)
(3) *Bauddha* (author Buddhi-mūrti)
(4) *Ārhata* (author Arhata or Jina)
(5) *Kāpāla*, *Śuddha-Śaiva*, *Pāśupata* (a group, author Śiva).

Thus among the Pāñcarātras, we find two sub-divisions, one laying emphasis possibly in *bhakti* and the other on *yoga*, though the latter was regarded as *rajasa*.[2]

In his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra* (II. ii. 42-5), Saṃkarācārya controverts the Bhāgavata-Pāñcarātra doctrine, showing indirectly that the Pāñcarātra school was still an important one in his time. From this account, we get further the following notices of the sect :—

First, that it was opposed to the Vedas and that the doctrine was started by Śāṇḍilya;

Secondly, it recognised the four-fold *vyūha* doctrine;

Thirdly, it maintained that from Vāsudeva sprang Saṃkarṣaṇa, from Saṃkarṣaṇa Pradyumna and from Pradyumna Aniruddha.

We have already seen that the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the Mahābhārata gives us an account of the Pāñcarātra doctrine which was in agreement with the Vedas and we have tried to show that the account must have been composed in the Kuṣāṇa age. The un-Vedic Pāñcarātra, therefore, flourished sometime after the days of the Kuṣāṇas and Śāṇḍilya may have been the founder of this heterodox school. From the commentary, it is further clear that this heterodox sect emphasised upon *abhigamana*—going to temples with abject devotion; *upādāna*—carrying or gathering different objects of worship; *ijyā*—worship; *svādhyāya*- muttering of the eight syllable mantra (*Om namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya*); and practice of *Yoga*, as leading to salvation.

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[1] Farquhar, *l.c.* pp. 183-4.
[2] *JRAS*, 1911, pp. 940-41.

Thus these neo-Vaiṣṇavas took the principle of *Yoga* philosophy in the background of their *bhakti* doctrine. They further discarded the Purāṇic account that Saṃkarṣaṇa was the elder brother of Vāsudeva while Pradyumna and Aniruddha were latter's son and grandson respectively. The members of the Vṛṣṇi family are given a philosophical colouring and it is said that while Vāsudeva is *Paramātmā*, Saṃkarṣaṇa is *jīva*, Pradyumna *manas* and Aniruddha *ahaṃkāra*; "*Vāsudevo nāma paramātmocyate Saṃkarṣaṇo nāma jīvaḥ Pradyumnyo nāma manaḥ Aniruddho nāmāhaṃkāraḥ.*" These Bhāgavata-Pāñcarātras further held that each member of the *vyūha* springs from the one just preceding him. As Schrader states : "The Pāñcarātra teaches a chain as it were, of emanation; each emanation except the first originating from an anterior emanation; and thus the favourite image of the process has, with the Pāñcarātras, become that of one flame proceeding from another flame. Any production, upto the formation of the Egg, is imagined as taking place in this way.[1]"

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[1] Schrader, *Introduction to the Pāñcarātra* (Madras, 1916), p. 35.

CHAPTER IV

The Gopāla Sub-Sect

A figure of Kṛṣṇa-Govardhana-dhara in red sandstone from Mathura, now preserved in the Mathura Museum, has been assigned by Coomaraswamy to the Kuṣāṇa period.[1] Another specimen of the same figure belonging to the same age is preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. These interesting specimens unmistakably point to the rise of the Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa sub-sect during the period with which we are dealing here. The account of this sub-sect is preserved in the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and other later sectarian works. As the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Viśṇu Purāṇa* cannot be assigned to any definite age, though it is almost certain that they took their present form in the fourth century, with later additions and interpolations, it is necessary to examine critically what particular phases of the sub-sect had developed in the Scytho-Kuṣāṇa age and what later. Now among the achievements of this cow-herd god, the above two works mention the following :—

(i) Subduing of the nāga Kāliya
(ii) Stopping of the Indra festival in Vraja
(iii) Amorous play with the cow-herdesses
(iv) Defeat and killing of Kaṃsa

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[1] Coomaraswamy, A. K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, Pl. xxxix, Fg. 102.

A critical study of the available evidences would show that the exploits of the god as described in (i) and (iii) above were not possibly conceived of in the Scytho-Kuṣāṇa age. Inscriptions from Mathura and the adjoining regions show that the Jaina faith was predominant in the place, while there are at least three inscriptions showing the prevalence of the Nāga cult there. The story of the subduing of Kāliya nāga shows evidently the suppression of the Nāga cult by that of Gopāla and this appears to have happened after *c.* 300 A. D.

Similarly, Kṛṣṇa's amorous relationship with the *gopīs* is possibly hinted at for the first time in the early Paharpur sculptures of the Gupta age. Farquhar points out that "the dramatist Bhāsa, who probably dates from the third century A. D., has a play called *Bālacarita*, which tells the story of Kṛṣṇa's youth as its name indicates. In it the *Hallisa* sport is merely an innocent dance. In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* there are already various erotic touches which go a good deal further, while in the *Harivaṃśa* the whole story of his youth is told at much greater length.[1]" The amorous play of Kṛṣṇa presupposes the development of left hand Tāntricism which possibly appeared for the first time in the Gupta age.

The object of worship with the Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa sub-sect is the child Kṛṣṇa, who grew up in the house of king Nanda in company with his brother Balarāma. This sub-sect did not recognise the *vyūha* theory, for it takes into account only the first two deities of the *vyūha*, Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and Saṃkarṣaṇa.

From section X of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* it appears that the cowherds of Vraja used to worship Indra, the Vedic god of rain. It is stated that Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa put an end to this worship and introduced in its place the worship of the hill of Govardhana. The boy-god, the story runs, showed on this occasion his miraculous power by holding the hillock on his fingers. As pointed out by several scholars, here possibly we may detect the influence of the Buddhist Caitya worship on this new sub-sect, while suppression of the worship of Indra shows the un-Vedic factors in the cult, though attempts have simultaneously been made, as we shall see later on, to show that many of the traits of the boy-god may be traced to the different characteristics of the Vedic Viṣṇu. The red sandstone figures from Mathura, referred to above, evidently bear witness to this exploit of Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa.

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[1] Farquhar, *l.c.* p. 144.

In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the *Harivaṃśa* we have got an account of how Kṛṣṇa went to Mathura from Vraja or Gokula and after several marvellous feats killed Kaṃsa. We have already referred to the dramatic play of *Kaṃsavadha* mentioned in the *Mahābhāṣya* showing that the legend was at least as old as the second century B. C.[1]

From the Great Epic it is clear that the cult of Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa hardly got any universal recognition at first. Thus in the *Sabhāparvan* Siśupāla condemns Kṛṣṇa with the following words :—"If in his childhood he slew Śakuni (or the bird), or the horse and the bull, who had no skill in fighting, what is the wonder? If a wagon, and an inanimate piece of wood, were upset by him with his foot, what wonderful thing did he do? If the mountain Govardhana, a mere ant-hill, was held up by him for seven days, I do not regard that as anything remarkable, ...If he being a slayer of cattle, of woman, is to be reverenced....how Bhīṣma, can such a person merit encomium?[2]" It is generally believed that the account is a late interpolation, for "when we turn to Bhīṣma's praise of Kṛṣṇa in ch. 38, there is no mention of Putanā, and the vulture or any other of the exploits." As Farquhar says: "It is probable that these local legends had been long current in Mathura. The point we emphasise is that they had been accepted into the official body of Vaiṣṇava teaching when the didactic Epic was formed."[1]

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[1] *Supra*, p. 43, *Mahābhāṣya*, on Pāṇini, iii. 1. 26.

[2] *Mbh*, ii, 41.6ff.

It has been assumed by some scholars that the legend of Kṛṣṇa's birth, his transfer from Mathura to Gokula or Vraja after he was born, his life as a herdsman etc. can only be explained by the influence of Christianity and the Christian legends. R. G. Bhandarkar thinks that the Âbhīras brought such legends into the country. Thus he observes: "If then about the end of the second century and in the third, the Âbhīras enjoyed high political position, they must have migrated into the country in the first century. They probably brought with them the worship of the boy-god and the story of his humble birth, his reported father's knowledge that he was not his son and the massacre of the innocents. The last two correspond to Nanda's knowing that he was not the father of Kṛṣṇa and Kaṃsa's killing all children. The stories of Kṛṣṇa's boy-hood, such as that of killing Dhenukā, a demon in the form of a wild ass, were brought by Âbhīras, and others were developed after they came to India. It is possible that they brought with them the name Christ also, and this name probably led to the identification of the boy-god with Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. The Goanese and the Bengalees often pronounce the name Kṛṣṇa as Kuṣṭo or Kriṣṭo, and so the Christ of the Âbhīras was recognised as a Sanskrit Kṛṣṇa.[2]"

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[1] Farquhar, *l.c.*, p. 100, fn. 6.

[2] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaṣṇavism*, *Śaivism* etc., p. 53.

The above account is based unfortunately on several misconceptions. The Âbhīras are mentioned in the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali, a work of *c.* 150 B. C., and as Tarn thinks, they possibly entered into India during the period of confusion after Alexander's invasion.[1] If thus the Âbhīras were present in India before the birth of Christ, how could they bring the legend of Christ's life in the country ? In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* further we have no mention of the Âbhīras in connection with the childhood of Kṛṣṇa. There Kṛṣṇa grew up amidst the Gopas, who can hardly be identified with the Âbhīras. The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* connects the Âbhīras with Western India,[2] while the *Geography* of Ptolemy locates them in the Lower Indus Valley. In the Mahābhārata, the Âbhīras are described as living near the Vinaśana region, i.e., the place where the river Sarasvatī disappears in the sand, the present Sirhind, in the Hariyana.[3] There is no evidence to connect the Âbhīras with the Śūrasena country at an early date. It was at a very late period that the Âbhīras came to be associated with the early life of Kṛṣṇa in Gokula.

Macnicol observes : "At the same time there seems to be good ground for believing that about the middle of the seventh century Nestorian missions (which are believed to have entered India from the north in the year 639) may have brought stories of the child Christ as well as pictures and ritual observances which affected the story of Kṛṣṇa as related in the Purāṇas and the worship of Kṛṣṇa specially in relation to the celebration of his birth-festival. To this belongs the birth in a cow-house among cattle, 'the massacre of the innocents', the story that his fosterfather Nanda was travelling at the time to Mathura to pay tax or tribute (*kara*) to Kaṃsa, and other details to be found in the various Purāṇas, and in the *Jaimini Bhārata* (a work of a date earlier than the beginning of the thirteenth century).[1]”

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[1] Tarn, *GB*, p. 712.

[2] *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, ed. Schoff, p. 39.

[3] *Mbh*, ix, 37.1.

While on the one hand the similarities pointed out by Macnicol are far-fetched (e.g., Kṛṣṇa was not born in a cow-house among cattle), Keith has pointed out that there is no proof whatsoever that the Nestorian mission entered India in 639 A. D.[2] Further, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* certainly, and perhaps *Harivaṃśa* also, was composed before the seventh century A. D. In fact, as Elliot has pointed out “there is little reason to regard Christianity as an important factor in the evolution of Hinduism, because (a) there is no evidence that it appeared in an influential form before the sixth century, and (b) there is strong evidence that most of the doctrines and practices resembling Christianity have an Indian origin.[3]”

The child-life of Kṛṣṇa seems to have developed from the traditions of Viṣṇu recorded in the Vedic literature. As Raychaudhuri points out, “In the Ṛg-Veda, 1.2.18., Viṣṇu is called *Gopa*. In I. 154.6 we have a reference to the many-horned swiftly moving cows in the abode of Viṣṇu. In the Ṛg-Veda, I.155.6, Viṣṇu is described as a youth who is no longer a child. In the Ṛg-Veda VII. 99.5, we have a story of Sambar's defeat at the hands of Viṣṇu. In the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* (II. 5. 24), Viṣṇu is called Govinda and Dāmodara, though there is no indication of his identification with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva.[4]” It appears that the Gopāla cult thus developed from the legends of Viṣṇu in the Vedic literature, though we may trace, as already stated, some amount of Buddhistic influence on it, e.g. worship of hill of Govardhana, etc.

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[1] Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 275.
[2] *JRAS*, 1915, pp. 839-40.
[3] Elliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. iii., p. 427.
[4] Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, p. 74.

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After *c.* 500 A. D., the centre of the Gopāla-Kṛṣṇá sub-sect which, as we have already seen, had been in Mathura, shifted to Bengal as proved by the archaeological evidences from Paharpur and its surroundings. K. G. Goswami has prepared a nice list of these sculptures[1] which seem to portray the entire life of child Kṛṣṇa as depicted in the *Harivaṃśa* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. For the sake of convenience we may note the list here :—

(a) Devakī handing over new born Kṛṣṇa to Vasudeva
(b) Vasudeva carrying infant Kṛṣṇa
(c) Kṛṣṇa lifting Govardhana mount
(d) Kṛṣṇa uplifting the twin Arjuna trees
(e) Kṛṣṇa killing the demon Keśin in one sculpture and Kṛṣṇa along with Balarāma wrestling with Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika, thus foiling all the plans of Kaṃsa
(f) Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā together, in amorous pose, the former touching the breast of the latter
(g) Dragging of Kaṃsa by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma

The above archaeological evidences, specially (f) above, present us with some interesting studies. As we have already stated, the story of Kṛṣṇa's trampling over the Nāga Kāliya and the boy-god's amorous play with the Gopīs must have been of later growth and engrafted on the cult. In Bengal, the story of Kāliya failed to be a popular theme with the Paharpur sculptors evidently because the Nāga cult was not of prime importance in ancient Bengal. On the other hand, the amorous life of the god became very popular in the country as it became the home of Tāntricism from a very early date.

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[1] K. G. Goswami, *SV*, p. 41.

Some scholars think that in (f) above we have a figure of Rukmiṇī or Satyabhāmā and not of Rādhā who is supposed to be a product of later days. Here, however, we should note the following points :—

(a) Satyabhāmā or Rukmiṇī has no place in the life of Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa. They became the wives of Vāsudeva after he had left Vṛndāvana, while on the other hand, the Paharpur sculptures are more concerned with the life of the god at Vṛndāvana.

(b) As regards Rādhā, we may note that she is mentioned in the *Matsya Purāṇa* :—
Śivakuṇḍe Śivānandā Nandinī Devikātaṭe,
Rukmiṇī Dvāravatyāntu Rādhā Vṛndāvane vane
(13.38)

From the above description it is thus quite clear that in Bengal the Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa cult was gradually imbibing Tāntric traits or, in other words, the sect was now gradually leaning towards left-handedness.

Besides Bengal, another centre of the sect appears to have been Mandor near Jodhpur in Rajasthan. Here two stone sculptures have been discovered one showing Kṛṣṇa holding the Govardhana mountain, while the other one shows Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma slaying Dhenukāsura.[1] There is no evidence to show that the Rajasthan sub-sect had in any way come under the Tāntric influence in this period.

In the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, and to a greater extent in the *Harivaṃśa*, we find the presence of the Tāntric elements in the same sub-sect. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* contains the story of Yogamāyā showing how the followers of the sub-sect were gradually making alliance with the Tāntric mother cult, but in it at the same time there are some erotic touches in the *Hallisa* sport. In the *Harivaṃśa* the story of Kṛṣṇa's youth is related in greater details and the *Hallisa* there undoubtedly alludes to physical connection. This possibly shows that *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is earlier than *Harivaṃśa.*

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[1] *ASIR*, 1905-6, pp. 135f; Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, Pl. xliv, 166.

CHAPTER V

The Vāsudeva-viṣṇu Worshippers

We have already seen how Vāsudeva was regarded as a superhuman figure in the earlier period and came to be regarded variously as a part of Viṣṇu or identical with Viṣṇu. It was, however, in the Gupta age that Vāsudeva's identification with Viṣṇu became an accomplished fact and the great mantra *Oṃ namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya* came to be regarded as the best one for worshipping Viṣṇu as well. This shows that a Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu sect now became prominent and the *mantra* became gradually the mantra *par excellence* of all the Vaiṣṇava sub-sects.

This *mantra* is met with in the archaeological records for the first time in the Khoh Copper Plate inscription (529 A. D.) of Mahārāja Saṃkhoba which refers to "the enjoyment of the sovereignty of the Gupta king,"[1] though it does not mention any Gupta king by name. The Gupta kings were devout Vaiṣṇavas and it was evidently through their influence that Vaiṣṇavism became prevalent in the territory ruled over by the Parivrājaka monarchs.

A terra-cotta seal with the same legend has been discovered in Bhita near Allahabad which from a very early period was included within the empire of the Guptas. The seal shows that there must have been a temple of the god Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu in that place, where such sealings were issued as votive tablets.[1]

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[1] *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. iii, p. 112.

Vaiṣṇavism spread to a great extent in India, as already stated, under the patronage of the Gupta monarchs who were devout Vaiṣṇavas. The Guptas had their home in the region extending from N. Bengal to Magadha[2] and Vaiṣṇavism was already a living force in Bengal as proved by the Susunia record of Candravarman.[3] The Guptas were thus cultivating or fostering a living cult. As H. C. Raychaudhuri says : "The Great Gupta sovereigns of Magadha describe themselves as *Paramabhāgavatas* and were unquestionably great champions of the religion of Vāsudeva. With the rise of their power Bhāgavatism, which was now synonymous with Vaiṣṇavism, naturally came to the forefront and spread to the remotest corners of India. The general prevalence of the religion throughout the Gupta Empire is attested by numerous inscriptions and sculptures[4]." A study of these archaeological records would no doubt be interesting as showing the influence and provenance of the Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu sect in the age under review.

The famous Meherauli inscription of King Candra shows that the monarch built a *dhvaja* or pillar out of regard for Viṣṇu on the Viṣṇupāda hill. The identification of this Candra has been a matter of great controversy among the Indologists; but if we take into account the facts that palaeographically the record is to be assigned to the Gupta period, that Candra Gupta also takes the name of Candra on his copper coins, that Delhi, where the record has been found, formed a part of the Gupta empire, we can possibly infer that the *dhvaja* or pillar was erected by the Gupta emperor Candra Gupta II, during whose reign consequently the Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu sect made considerable progress.[1]

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[1] *ASIR*. 1911-12, p. 47.
[2] Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, p. 139.
[3] *Ep. Ind.* xi. p. 317ff.; xiii, p. 133.
[4] Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, p. 101.

Candra Gupta II's daughter Prabhāvatī Guptā was married to a Vākāṭaka prince and through her the Gupta monarch's influence and Vaiṣṇavism also spread in the Maharashtra region. It may be noted in this connection further that some medieval chiefs of Kuntala also trace their lineage to Candra Gupta. Whatever may be the historical value of this tradition, it is clear from the epigraphic evidences that Vaiṣṇavism made great progress in South India about this time. Thus in her Rithpur Copper Plate record Prabhāvatī Guptā is described as *Bhagavat pādānudhyātā*[2], while in the Poona inscription of the year 13 we find that the epigraph begins with the expression "*Jitam bhagavatā*", and Prabhāvatī Guptā is styled as "*atyanta Bhagavadbhaktā.*[3]" These evidences unmistakably show that the Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu sect had spread its influence in the trans-Vindhya region in the kingdom of the Vākāṭakas who were originally Śaivas. Thus in the Chammak inscription of Pravarasena II of the year 18, Rudrasena, the husband of Prabhāvatī Guptā is described as "*Bhagavata' ścakrapāṇeḥ prasādopārjita-Śrī-samudayasya*" (of one who earned the mass of prosperity through the grace of Bhagavat Cakrapāṇi or Viṣṇu)[4]

It was about this period that we find the presence of Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu worshippers in the eastern part of the Deccan also. As pointed out by K. G. Goswami : "Vaiṣṇavism had an easy access into the family of the Pallava kings of Kāñcīpuram in the 4th century A. D. The copper plate inscription found at Gunapadeya, Kondapur Taluka, Guntur District, Madras, (now preserved in the British Museum, London), mentions that Cārudevī, wife of Yuvamakārāja (Crown-prince) Śrī Vijaya-Buddha Varman in the reign of Śrī Vijaya Skanda Varman of the Pallava dynasty made a gift of four *nivartanas* of land to Lord Nārāyaṇa installed in the temple of *Kulimahattaraka* for the increase of their life and strength. Thus the above record proves beyond doubt that although Vedic rites and sacrifices are stated to have been performed by the members of the royal family of the Pallavas of Kāñcīpuram, some female members, on the other hand, were devoted to the cult of god Vāsudeva in about 4th century A.D.[1]" It may be noted in this connection that the Guptas were also followers of the orthodox Vedic religion as proved by their performance of the Aśvamedha and other sacrifices, but at the same time most of them were devoted to Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu. In fact, Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu cult of the age was developing in the background of the orthodox Vedic traditions.

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[1] Chattopadhyaya, *EHVI*, p. 170.
[2] *JPASB*, (NS). XX. pp. 58f.
[3] *Ep. Ind.* xv, pp. 41f.
[4] *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. iii. pp. 236f.

Kumāra Gupta, the son and successor of Candra Gupta II, was also a follower of the God Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu. He issued coins with *Garuḍa* standard while his silver coins bear the legend "*Paramabhāgavata mahārājādhirāja...*" showing the nature of his faith. In the Mandasor inscription of Kumāra Gupta and Bandhuvarman, we find the description of Viṣṇu as wearing the Kaustubha jewel and a garland of full bloom lotus.[2]" It was evidently under the influence of the Guptas that Vaiṣṇavism had spread into the Mandasor region which was an autonomous unit within the Gupta empire. Thus in an inscription issued from the same place and belonging to the time of Naravarman and bearing the date Mālava year 461=404 A. D., Viṣṇu has been described as having thousand heads and remaining sleepy in the water of the four oceans.[1] The record thus belongs to the time of Candra Gupta II and proves indirectly that the influence of the Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu sect was prevalent in the Mandasor region even before the time of Kumāra Gupta I. Naravarman's son Viśvavarman was also a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu and in his inscription dated Mālava year 480=423 A. D. Viṣṇu has been described under the name Madhusūdana, or the destroyer of the demon Madhu, and as bearer of discus and club. The description clearly shows that we have here an account of two-handed Viṣṇu who is no other than Vāsudeva.

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[1] K. G. Goswami, *SV.* p. 32.

[2] Sircar, *Select ins.* pp. 288ff.

To turn now to the Imperial Gupta time. Kumāra Gupta I's son and successor Skanda Gupta bears on his coin the title *paramabhāgavata* showing that he was also a follower of the Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu creed. His Junagadh inscription opens with an invocation to Lord Viṣṇu and the record shows further how his officials like Cakrapālita built a temple of Lord Viṣṇu under the title of *Cakrabhṛt*. The life of Cakrapālita, it is further stated, was devoted to Lord Govinda.[2] Thus Vāsudeva-Govinda and Viṣṇu are held to be identical. The Bhitari Pillar inscription of Skanda Gupta records the installation of the image of Viṣṇu under the name of Sārṅgiṇ and the gift of a village by the emperor in memory of his departed father.[3]

If the evidences of the epigraphic records are to be believed, in the later days of the Imperial Guptas, the Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu sect continued in an abated form and the

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 377f.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 299f.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 312.

Pāñcarātra sub-sect came to the forefront, as proved by the references to incarnations in the epigraphic records (*supra*). Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu sect no doubt flourished as shown by the Maliya C. P. inscription of Dharasena II informing us that Dhruvasena I, the king of Valabhī, was a Bhāgavata or Vaiṣṇava.[1] The most salient features of "Gupta Vaiṣṇavism" have thus been summarised by H. C. Raychaudhuri :—

> "It is clear from the Tusam inscription that the Sātvatas or the Bhāgavatas had now definitely accepted the identification of their Krishṇa with Vishṇu. Vishṇu's epithet 'the mighty bee on the water-lily which is the face of Jāmbavatī' certainly refers to Krishṇa who is in the Purāṇas and the *Mahā-Umāmagga Jātaka* (The Jataka, edited by Cowell, Vol. VI, pp. 216-7) the husband of Jāmbavatī or Jambāvatī. But though Krishṇa and Vishṇu were regarded as identical, the latter name is now the more usual designation of the Supreme god of the Sātvatas or the Bhāgavatas. Vishṇu was now the Supreme Deity, Krishṇa was merely his next perfect Incarnation. In other words, Bhāgavatism had now lost itself in Vishṇuism.[2]"

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After the fall of the Guptas, Vaiṣṇavism began to lose its hold in North India and in the first half of the 7th century A. D., all the important kings of the North embraced Saivism. Vaiṣṇavism, however, still maintained its existence and from the *Si-yu-ki* we learn about the following centres of the creed—

(i) *Na-fo-ti-po-ku-lo*—Yuan Chwang says that from Kānyakubja, "a journey of above 100 li to south east brought him to the city of Na-fo-ti-po-ku-lo (Navadevakula). This city, which was on the east bank of the Ganges, was above twenty li in circuit, with flowery groves and clear ponds giving interchange of sunshine and shadow. To the north next of it, and also on the east bank of the Ganges, was a magnificent *Deva* Temple." Watters observes that "this temple, which was evidently of recent date, may have been devoted to the worship of Viṣṇu whose name Hari may be the word transcribed by Fa-hsien's A (or Ho) -li[1]"

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[1] *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, iii, p. 165.

[2] Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, pp. 172ff.

(ii) *Chan-chu* or Ghazipur in U. P. From the *Si-Yu-ki*, it is clear that this country was about 300 li east of Vārāṇasī following the course of the Ganges. In this country "to the north of the Ganges was a Nārāyaṇa temple, with halls and terraces beautifully adorned, and with sculptured stone images in the highest style of art.[2]"

As the Chinese traveller thus saw only two centres of Vaiṣṇava worship in North India, it is clear that Vaiṣṇavism was on its decline in the region. Archaeological records, however, furnish us with some more evidences. Thus from the Rajasan site of Sabhar, District Dacca, a terracotta plaque has been discovered. It bears on it the Vaiṣṇava formulae : "*Oṃ namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya*" and also the standing figure of a four-armed Viṣṇu.[3] This shows that Vaiṣṇavism still had its hold over Eastern Bengal in the 7th-8th century A. D.

The Sarnath inscription of Prakaṭāditya, which has been assigned to the second half of the 7th century A. D.

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[1] Watters, *On Yuan Chwang*, i, pp. 252-3.
[2] *Ibid.*, ii, p. 60.
[3] *ASIR*, 1927-28, pp. 111-12, Pl. xlix. fg. b.

on palaeographical grounds by Fleet, records the building of a temple of god Muradviṣ or Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, the slayer of the demon Mura. This evidently shows that Benares, which was the stronghold of Śaivism, favoured Vaiṣṇavism as well. In this connection, we may note further that the lower portion of a four-armed terracotta figure of Viṣṇu has been discovered from Rājghāt near the Kāśī Railway station.[1]

As we have already stated, the earliest archaeological evidence referring to Kṛṣṇa's amorous play with the *Gopīs* also hails from the second half of the 7th century A. D. It was in this period that Tāntricism was slowly and steadily spreading its influence over the different sects, and Vaiṣṇavism also came under its influence. In fact, the amorous play can only be explained by the influence of Tāntricism.

It has rightly been asserted that the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is the Gospel of Vaiṣṇavism and a proper understanding of the religion can hardly be possible without a study of the same. Winternitz thinks that the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is "not much later than the fifth century A. D.", and that "on the whole, at least, has been preserved in its original form.[2]" We may thus expect to get in it a faithful picture of the Vaiṣṇava sects in the early Gupta age.

It must be clearly stated at the outset that mainly "it belongs to the Pāñcarātra sect." It carries, however, the tradition of the different sub-sects of the Vaiṣṇavas, but these sub-sects have by the time of its composition been so mixed up together that it becomes often difficult to clearly demonstrate them. But still we can pick up the following topics from the work :—

I. Pāñcarātra doctrine :

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[1] *Journ. U. P. Hist.* R. S. xiv. p. 4.

[2] Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, i. p.

(a) the story of Boar incarnation, 1.4

(b) The story of Man-Lion incarnation 1. 26ff.

II. The Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa doctrine :

The entire fifth part of the book deals with the story of Gopāla Kṛṣṇa.

III. The Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa doctrine :

The glory of Viṣṇu is described in different parts, but specially in 1.2.20, 22; III. 8; VI. 5.

In VI. 7. we have got an account of *Brahma-yoga* which evidently was to be performed by all the Vaiṣṇavas irrespective of the sub-sect to which one may belong. Special emphasis is laid upon the control of mind, which, it is stated emphatically, must be free from all desire. When the mind is thus freed, the supreme *Brahman* is attached to it just as a magnet attracts a piece of iron. It is enjoined that a *yogin* after freeing his mind of all desire should practise *brahmacarya* or celibacy, *ahiṃsā* or non-violence, *satya* or truth, *asteya* or non-stealing and *aparigraha* or renunciation. These are regarded as the rules of outward conduct of a true Vaiṣṇava, while inwardly he should practise the reading of the Veda, *śauca* or inward cleanliness, satisfaction, *tapasyā* or penance and should keep the mind fixed on God.

"*Brahmacarya=mahiṃsāñca satyāsteyāparigrahān,*
Seveta yogī niṣkāmo yogyatām svamanonayan,
Svādhyāya-śauca-santoṣa-tapāṃsi niyatātmavān,
Kurvīta brahmani tathā parasmiṇ pravaṇaṃ manaḥ
(VI. 7. 36—7)

Here we can trace clearly the influence of the *Yoga* Philosophy on Vaiṣṇavism. Thus in the *Yoga-sūtra* of Patañjali, it is stated :—

"*Ahiṃsā-satyā-steya-brahmacaryā-parigrahā yamāḥ*"
(II. 30).

Again, we read :—

"*Śauca-santoṣa-tapaḥ-svādhyāyeśvarapraṇidhānāniniyamāḥ*".
(II. 32)

Though thus emphasis is laid on the principles of *Yoga* philosophy, yet we find that special stress is laid on *bhakti* which is undoubtedly the corner-stone of Vaiṣṇavism. Thus Lord Viṣṇu says to Prahlāda :—

"*Yathā te niścalaṃ ceto mayi bhakti-samanvitaṃ,*
tathā tvaṃ mat-prasādena nirvāṇaṃ paramāpsyasi"
(I. 20. 28)

Another significant point to be noted in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is that the Man-lion incarnation of Viṣṇu is described as Vāsudeva showing indirectly that the different sub-sects of the Vaiṣṇavas were now regarding Vāsudeva as the supreme god and as fully identical with Viṣṇu, though elsewhere again Vāsudeva is regarded as a part only of supreme god Viṣṇu (V. 1.2). The *Purāṇa* is evidently quoting here traditions of different ages regarding Vāsudeva.

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While thus Vaiṣṇavism was declining in North India, it found a new field in the region to south of the Vindhya. The introduction of Vaiṣṇavism in the Maharashtra country under the influence of Prabhāvatī Guptā had indeed far reaching effects. The Nala dynasty of South India favoured Vaiṣṇavism while in the Badami Cava No. VI we find the presence of Viṣṇu-Trivikrama and at Aihole we find in an old temple the figure of four-armed Viṣṇu in a slab on the ceiling. These examples prove that Maharastra region continued to be an important centre of Vaiṣṇavism since the time of the Sātavāhana queen Nāyanikā. This is further corroborated by the fact that there are two grants discovered in the Nasik district and belonging to the time of Pṛthivī Candra Bhogaśakti eulogising Viṣṇu in the form of Boar.[1]"

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[1] *Ep. Ind.* xxv, no. 22.

In the far south the religion took a curious turn. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* informs us that the devotees of Viṣṇu will appear in the south on the banks of Tāmraparṇī, Kṛatamālā or Vaigai, Payasvinī or Palar, Kāverī and Mahānada or the Periyar. S. N. Das Gupta points out that "the Arvars, Namm-arvar and Madhura-Kaviy-arvar, were born in the Tāmraparṇī country, Periy-arvar and his adopted daughter Andal in the Kṛtamālā, Poygaiyarvar, Bhutatt'-arvar, Pey-arvar and Tiru-marisai Piran in the Payasviṇī, Tondar-adi-podiy-arvar, Tiru-pan-arvar and Tiru-mangaiy-arvar in the Kāverī, and Periy-arvar and Kula-śekhara Perumal in the Mahānada countries. In the *Bhāgavata-Māhātmya* we find a parable in which *Bhakti* is described as a distressed woman who was born in the Drāviḍa country, had attained her womanhood in the Carnatik and Mahārāṣṭra, and had travelled in great misery through Guzerat and North India with her two sons *Jñāna* and *Vairāgya* to Brindavan, and that owing to the hard conditions through which she had to pass her two sons had died. This shows that at least according to the traditions of the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* Southern India was regarded as a great stronghold of the *Bhakti* cult."

It has already been shown that *bhakti* was practised in North India as early as the time of the later Upaniṣads. So it is difficult to understand what is meant by the statement that the cult had its origin in Drāviḍa country. Scholars generally maintain that while the cult in Northern India was tempered by *jñāna* and *karma*, that of the south was of an emotional type. The statement of the *Bhāgavata-māhātmya* while referring to the emotional *bhakti* of the Alvars or Arvars really mean that such a cult ultimately leads to *jñāna* and *vairāgya* when emotionalism disappears. How this emotionalism became predominant in the Tamil country is a matter of speculation. The *Silappadikaram* informs us that temples of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma existed in Mādurā, Kaveripaddinam and other places. This shows evidently the extension of the cult as it existed in Maharashtra in the time of the Sātavāhana queen Nāyanikā. This cult in any case can hardly be regarded as the precursor of emotionalism of the Alvars. S. N. Das Gupta points out that, 'the *Prapannā-mṛta* (ch. 77) however refers to three other Vaiṣṇava saints who preceded the Arvars. They were (i) Kaṣāyayogin, born in Kanci, (ii) Bhūtayogīndra, born in Mallipura, (iii) Bhrānta-yogīndra called also *Mahat* and *Mahārya* who was the incarnation of Viśvaksena. It was these sages who advised the five saṃskāras of Vaiṣṇavism (*tapaḥ pauṇḍras-tathā nāma mantro yāgaś-ca pañcamaḥ*). They preached the emotional Vaiṣṇavism in which *Bhakti* is realized as maddening intoxication associated with tears etc. They described their feelings of ecstasy in three works, comprising three hundred verses written in Tamil. They were also known by the names of Mādhava, Daśārya and Saroyogin.'

The date of the Alvars is still a moot question but most of them evidently lived after the period of Saṃkarācārya.

We quote below a concise account of these reformers as given by Farquhar—

> "From the seventh to the tenth centuries there seem to have been a succession of poet-singers in Tamil land who wandered about from shrine to shrine, composing hymns and singing in ecstasy before the images of their loved divinity. Many were Saivas, and many were Vaiṣṇavas. Of the latter twelve are specially remembered and honoured under the title of Āḷvārs. Their religion was above all a passionate emotion....They taught outcastes, and some of them are said to have been outcastes. Apart from local legends and epithets suggested by the temples or the

forms of the images, their poems show only the influence of the Epics and early *Purāṇas*. . The following is the list of their names in the traditional order of their appearance.—1. Poygaiar, 2. Bhutattu, 3. Peyar, 4. Tirumalisai, 5. Sathakopa or Nammāḷvār, 6. Madhurakavi, 7. Kulaśekhar, 8. Periyar, 9. Andal, 10. Tondarippodi, 11. Tiruppanar, 12. Tirumaṅgai. One of these, Andal, was a woman. Tirumaṅgai and Nammāḷvār are the greatest, and Nammāḷvār is the most famous of all. There is no certainty yet as to the chronology[1] of the Āḷvārs. Barnett suggests that Tirumaṅgai and Nammāḷvār belong to the eighth century or there-abouts, but other dates are proposed by other scholars.[1]"

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[1] Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 187-88.

SECTION C

The Śaivas

CHAPTER I

The Early Sects

It is really curious that in Vaiṣṇavism which flourished mainly in the Āryāvarta region, the citadel of Aryan culture, a human hero plays the primary role while the Vedic gods Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa occupy secondary positions. Śaivism, on the other hand, flourishing among the unorthodox, centred chiefly round the Vedic god Rudra-Śiva. In the later Saṃhitas and the *Brāhmaṇas* we find most of the names applied to Śiva in the Purāṇas and the Epic. Dr. N. Venkataramanayya has rightly stated that "some of these names such as Aśani, Ugra, Bhīma, Paśupati, Nīlakaṇṭha, Śitikaṇṭha, Kapardin, Kumāra had their origin in Rudra's association with Agni, others like Īśāna, Mahādeva were assumed by him as mark of his sovereignty over the universe and his superiority over gods; and a few arose out of Rudra's coalescence with local deities of similar character like Bhava and Sarva.[1]"

While we agree with the above view, it is difficult to accept the theory of the same scholar that Sarva was originally an Iranian god and Bhava a god of the nearby region, "somewhere in the north outside the Aryan world beyond the Mujavats.[1]" In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is stated that while Rudra is called Sarva by the Eastern (*prācya*) people, the Bāhlikas (inhabitants of the present Balkh in Afghanistan) call him Bhava. Dr. Venkataramanayya equates the term *prācya* with Parsa (the Persians) which occurs" in the Cuneiform inscriptions of the early Achaemenian emperors," and "is taken by some writers to mean the east or eastern country." But such an equation is wholly unwarranted, for it is clear from the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, which refers to the *grand-territorial divisions* that the Eastern country was the division that lay to the east of the *Dhruvā Madhyamā Pratiṣṭhitā diś*, i.e. the region lying to the east of Prayāga."[2] The above passage of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, therefore, shows that Rudra was worshipped by the people of Eastern India, and also by the Bāhlikas who lived in the north west of the Middle Division. We need not give much emphasis on the different names of Rudra in such accounts, for the Atharva Veda shows that Bhava was associated with the Eastern region while Sarva with the south. These statements merely show the universal worship of the god Rudra-Siva.

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[1] Venkataramanayya, *Rudra-Śiva*, p. 32.

Whether Rudra-Siva was connected in any way with the Iranians is a problem that cannot be easily solved. In this connection, however, we may note the following extracts from Haug's *Essays on the Religion of the Parsis*:

"Of great importance, for showing the original close relationship between the Brāhmaṇical and the Parsi religion is the fact that several of the Indian gods are actually mentioned by name in the *Zend Avesta*, some as demons, others as angels....Indra....is expressedly mentioned in the list of the Devas or Demons which we find in *Vend.* xix. 43. . . . Next to Indra stands Saurva daeva, whom we discover in one of Shiva's names Sharva."

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[2] *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, viii. 14; B. C. Sen, *Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal*, pp. 14ff.

(p. 272)

From the above quotation it is thus clear that Rudra-Śiva was known to the Iranians, and thus it is not unlikely that he was a god of the early Indo-European pantheon, though, of course, we cannot press the point further in the absence of other evidences.

In a litany of praise to eleven gods in the *Maitrāyanī Saṃhitā* of the Black Yajur-Veda Puruṣa is used as a title of Mahādeva-Śiva showing that Rudra has not only become auspicious (Śiva), already hinted at in the Śatarudrīya (*taṃ Śivanāmo'si*), but also the great Puruṣa or the force governing the cosmos. We are further furnished with the following interesting *Gāyatrī mantra* :

> *Tatpuruṣāya Vidmahe* : *Mahādevāya dhīmahi* :
> *Tanno Rudraḥ pracodayāt*;
> We know about *Puruṣa*; let us think about *Mahādeva* :
> May Rudra stimulate this in us.[1]"

The above account referring to *bhakti* as a natural ingredient may point to the existence of a Śaiva sect in the later Vedic age. In the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini occur the following two *sūtras* undoubtedly very important for studying the history of the sect :

(1) *Śivādibhyo'n* (iv. 1. 112)
(2) *Ayaḥśūladaṇḍājinābhyāṃ ṭhakṭhañau* (v. 2. 76)

The first *sūtra* means that an affix *aṅ* comes in the sense of a descendant after the name Śiva etc. . . . This does not necessarily imply that Pāṇini here refers to a Śaiva sect. If, however, we assume that the Śaivas regarded Śiva as their father, then the case becomes a different one. The early Greek writers refer to the tribes of the Punjab and North-Western Frontier Province region who came to India in the company of Dionysios, like the Nysians, or tribes like Siboi etc. who regarded Śiva as their ancestor.

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[1] *Maitrāyanī Saṃhitā*, ii. 9.1.

The second *sūtra* means that the affixes *ṭhaka* and *ṭhañ* are employed to the expressions *ayaḥśūla* and *daṇḍājina*. The term *ayahśūlika* is taken to denote a courageous person or *sāhasika*, while *daṇḍājinikā*, according to some manuscripts, would refer to a proud man or *dāmbhika*. Patañjali states that "if *ayaḥśūla* literally means an iron spike, the word so formed will apply to a Śiva-Bhāgavata which is not the intention of Pāṇini's *sūtra*". V. S. Agrawala thinks that a *daṇḍājinika* was a sham ascetic "who passes for an ascetic by the outward signs of staff and deer skin only" (*India as known to Pāṇini*, p. 381). These *dāṇḍājinikas* may have been the heterodox Pāśupatas, referred to later on, though we cannot be very sure on the point. They may have been very proud of their *yogic* feats.

Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador in the court of Candra Gupta Maurya (*c.* 324-300 B. C.), states that the Indians of his time dwelling in the plains worshipped Heracles, while those living in the mountains were worshippers of Dionysios. This Dionysios has been identified with Śiva on the ground that in early Indian literature the god has been described as *Girīśa*, 'lord of the mountains', *Giritra* 'living in mountains' etc. A critical discussion, however, seems to be necessary to bring in view the full import of the account.

It is well-known that the early Greek writers identified the deities of the non-Greek people with the deities of their own pantheon having similar nature and character. In Greek mythology, Dionysios is described as a healing god and is specially associated with vegetation rites, snake and phallic emblem.[1] Megasthenes must have known that the people of the hill regions of India used to worship a god having these characters and hence he has named the same as Dionysios. While in course of the present discussion, it will be shown that these characteristics are really attributable to Rudra-Śiva, the Bacchic festivals and vines associated with Dionysios show evidently that the latter has some affinity with Saṃkarṣaṇa or Baladeva also, for, Baladeva's "drunkenness is an essential part of his character,[2]" while Śiva has no such traits in early legends.

Strabo informs us again that the procession of Dionysios, with drums and cymbals, was the special characteristic of the Sydrakai or Oxydrakai, the Kṣudrakas, on the river Beas, and thus the jurisdiction of the god is at once extended from the hills to the plains. The Siboi, who lived below the junction of the Jhelum and Chenub, on the other hand, used to dress themselves with the skin of wild beasts and had clubs for their weapons, while they claimed descent from Dionysios. Levi draws our attention to the account of the *Mahāmayurī* where the presiding deity of the Śivapura country is said to be Śiva.[3] Śivapura is mentioned in the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali as *udicyagrāma* and is evidently identical with the Siboi country mentioned by the Classical authors. In this connection it may be noted that the work refers to the Śiva-Bhāgavatas who carried in their hands iron lances as an emblem of the deity they worshipped.[4]

From the above evidences it may possibly be inferred that the Siboi and the Oxydrakai were followers of the god Śiva and in them we have definitely an instance of the existence of a Śaiva sect in North-Western India. The god was further worshipped in the hill region extending to the west as far as Bactria, the present Balkh in Afghanistan, and in the north as far as Meros[1] or Meru, which may be identified with Pamir.[2] In this connection we may note that in the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*, Rudra is invoked to "depart beyond Mujavat, with thy bow unbended, with thy goad slackened, clothed with a skin.[3]" Mujavat was a part of the western Himalayan range, for the Atharva Veda Speaks of the Mujavats and the Gandhārins, the people of Gandhāra, the chief city of which was Puṣkalāvatī, modern Prang and Charsadda, seventeen miles north-west of Peshawar, on the Swat river, apparently as despised people. Since the Mujavats and the Gandhārins formed a group, it may be inferred that the Mujavat mountain was not far away from the Gandhāra country. In the Mahābhārata and the Vedic literature, mount Mujavat is described as the place wherefrom comes Soma[4]. In his interesting article, "*On the Ephedra, Huma and Soma plant*", Sir A. Stein has shown that Soma, Persian Huma, was prepared from the juice of Ephedra Pachyclada, a tall shrub growing in the region of the western Himalayas. In the famous Takman verse of the Atharva Veda, the Mujavats are associated with another people called the Mahāvṛṣas.[5] Dr. Venkataramanayya observes that "Mahāvṛṣas who are coupled with the Mujavats had probably some special connections, as suggested by their name, with bull, the emblem of Rudra who was spoken as *Vṛṣabha* and *Gopati* and of whom the *gomṛga* was a favourite victim[6]."

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[1] *ERE*, vol. vi, pp. 548, 402, 417 etc.
[2] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 212.
[3] Levi, *Mahāmayurī*, *FA*, 1915, p. 21.
[4] *Mahābhāṣya*, v. 2.76.

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[1] McCrindle, *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, pp. 162f.

[2] B. N. Seal, *Vaiṣṇavism and Christianity*, pp. 48f.

[3] *Vaj. Sam*, xvi. 3.61.

[4] *Mbh.* xiv. 8.1; *Vedic Index*, s. v. Soma and Mujavat.

[5] *Atharva Veda*, v. 22.5.

[6] Venkataramanayya, *Rudra-Śiva*, p. 23.

To understand the real nature of the Śaiva sect, the members of which used to dress themselves with the skin of wild beasts and had clubs as their weapons, as referred to above, we may turn to the Great Epic, which, as already stated, incorporated traditions of different periods, and which reached its present shape, according to Hopkins, about 300 A. D., though the kernel of the work is very old and may be pre-Buddhistic even. The story of *Dakṣa-yajña*, incorporated in the *Śāntiparvan*, throws interesting light on the point, but as it is of comparatively late date, we shall discuss it fully later on. Here we may only note the fact that Dakṣa who was performing a sacrifice excluded Śiva from the same and justified his own action with the words : "We have many Rudras, armed with lances and having matted locks on their heads. They are eleven in number. I know them all. But I do not know who this Maheśvara is.[1]" Later on, however, he propitiates the god by saying : "You have the *skin of a black deer* for your upper garment, have a snake for the sacred thread........I bow down to him who has matted locks, who carries the ascetic staff in his hand........and who is the soul of Brahman.[2]" From the context it is clear that here we have the description of Pāśupata Śiva.

If we now compare the above account of Pāśupata Śiva with the account of the Siboi as given by the Classical authors, it would appear that in the description we have a clear reference to the Pāśupata sect. From the statement that "we have many Rudras armed with lances and having matted locks on their heads" it is clear that there were other Śaiva sects dressed in the fashion (cf. *Mahābhāṣya*, v.2.76, referred to above) but the Pāśupatas only used the skin garment.

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[1] *Mbh*, xii. 283. 26-27.

[2] *Mbh*, xii. 283. 45-100.

Let us now turn to the other characteristics of Dionysios-Paśupati. First, Śiva as a healing god. In the Ṛg-Veda, Rudra is described as the best of all physicians,[1] while in the Atharva Veda Rudra and Soma are requested together to "drive away that hostile disease which has entered into our abode.[2]" In the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, Rudra is described as "the lord of the Soma plant,[3]" and thus Soma and Rudra, though originally two separate deities, came to be identified in later days. Megasthenes evidently noted this character of the god Śiva in his times and thus identified him with his Hellenistic counterpart.

The vegetation rites and the phallic emblem connected with the god Dionysios-Paśupati may be taken up together for discussion for both point to a "fertility cult" associated with the deity. In determining the nature of the so-called phallus worship associated with the god in the pre-Christian epoch, we have to study critically the following evidences :

(a) the pre-historic relics discovered in different parts of India;

(b) the references to *Śiśna-devāḥ* in the Vedic works; and

(c) the Gudimallam and the Bhita liṅgas.

J. Marshall has divided into three groups the cult stones discovered in the pre-historic sites of the Indus valley, viz., the baitylic, the phallic and the *yoni* ring stones.[4] Phallus-like objects were also found by Sir A. Stein in Mughal Ghundai and Periano Ghundai in North-Baluchistan. Discoveries from Shevaroy hills in the Salem district and from various places in Gujrat have thrown new light on the subject.[1] Our attention has further been drawn to the so-called "chessman" pillars of Dimapur and Kasomari Pathar in Assam, but there may be doubts whether we may call them "*originally phallic monuments.*[2]" The above instances show that possibly before the coming of the Aryans in India phallus worship was prevalent in some parts of the country specially among the tribes described as "*Saṃkīrṇa-yonayaḥ*" in the *Baudhāyāna Dharma-sūtra*. Let us now interpret the available Vedic account in the light of the above archaeological evidences.

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[1] *Ṛg-Veda*, ii. 33.4.

[2] *Atharva Veda*, vii. 42. 1-2.

[3] *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*; iv. 5.10.

[4] Marshall, *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization*, i. pp. 58ff.

The term "*Śiśna-devāḥ*" occurs twice in the Ṛg-veda, but its exact interpretation has been a matter of great controversy. Some Western scholars take the expression as meaning : 'those whose god is *Śiśna* (membrum virile). Sāyaṇa, however, gives the following explanation :

Śiśna-devāḥ/Śiśnena dīvyanti Krīḍanti
īti Śiśna-devāḥ/abrahmacaryyā ityarthaḥ/
tatḥā ca Yāskaḥ....'Śiśna-devāh abrahmacaryyāḥ'."

Translation

Śiśna-devāḥ are those who sport with the *śiśna* (membrum virile), i. e. unchaste men; as Yāska says, '*Śiśna-devāḥ* means the unchaste."

We have to discuss critically the reference in the *Ṛg-veda* and see whether we can accept the interpretation of the term as suggested by Sāyaṇa. One of the accounts runs as follows :

"Desiring to bestow strength in the struggle, that warrior (Indra) has besieged inaccessible places, at the time when, irresistible, slaying the *siśna devāḥ*, he by his force conquered the riches of the city with a hundred gates ".

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[1] *ABORI*, xiii, p. 151.

[2] Marshall, *l.c.* p. 60.

Here we have a clear reference to the *śiśna devāḥ* possessing immense riches and a city with a hundred gates. Now, if we accept Sāyaṇa's interpretation we have to infer that in the Vedic age, there was a city where all men were lascivious, a state of affairs which appears to be improbable. Further the word "*Yātavaḥ*", occurring in connection with the description of the *Śiśna-devāḥ* in R.*V*., VII. 21.5, shows clearly that a distinct ethnic entity is meant which followed customs repugnant to the Vedic Aryans. In interpreting the term "*anṛta-devāḥ*," Sāyaṇa himself takes the expression as a *Bahuvṛhi* compound, and we think that the expression *Śiśnadevāḥ* should also be interpreted in the same manner, giving us the meaning 'those whose god was *śiśna* or phallus.'

It is now generally believed that the invading Aryans destroyed the culture of the pre-historic Indus people about 1500 B.C. The vanquished must have lived in groups among their new masters evidently still following their own customs and occasionally rising in revolt. The presence of the buildings or cities with gateways and the discovery of the phallic emblems within the pre-historic ruins of the Indus valley naturally lead us to infer that the term "*yātavaḥ*" with cities of hundred gates and worshipping the phallus refers to the pre-historic Indus people. In course of time the Aryans absorbed this new cult within their own pantheon and gradually developed a philosophy that denied altogether the phallic character of the *liṅga*.

Though the worship of phallus is thus condemned in the Ṛg-Veda we can determine the presence of the phallus *motif* in the later Vedic culture. Agni is called *sahasra-muṣka* in the *Brāhmaṇas* and from Rudra's identity with Agni, as suggested by the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, phallus worship evidently came to be associated with Rudra-liṅgas, one found at Gudimallam and the other at Bhita. On the Gudimallam *liṅga*, Gopinath Rao makes the following observations : "The *liṅga* is made of a reddish igneous rock, very brittle and compact in its composition ...it is exactly five feet in height and bears upon its front portion a beautiful figure of Śiva. This figure of Śiva has two arms, in the right one of which a ram is held by its hindlegs and with its head hanging downwards; in the left one is held a water-pot, and a battle-axe (*paraśu*) rests upon the left shoulder. On the head of the figure of Śiva is a covering, resembling a turban, of plaited, not matted, hair. The face is distinctly Mongoloid in its features....it is noteworthy that there is no *yajñopavīta*, the Brāhmaṇical sacred thread, which is insisted upon in all *Āgamas*....The *liṅga* itself is composed of two parts, the nut and the shaft of the membrum virile, each of them shaped exactly like the original model, in a state of erection...The longitudinal facets on the erect organ (*ūrddhva-retas*) are also represented in this *liṅga*.[1]"

From the above description it is now quite clear that the earliest available Śiva-liṅga in India betrays distinctly its phallic nature. It has been assigned to the first century B. C. by excellent authorities,[2] though Bhandarkar thinks that it belongs to the fourth century A. D. The Mongoloid face of the deity and the absence of the sacred thread show that the inspiration came from the non-Aryan world.

The Bhita *liṅga* is less realistic, though R. D. Banerjee thinks that "the phallus is marked by deeply drawn lines." It is a *Mukhaliṅga* having five faces, and Gopinath Rao thinks that they represent the five aspects of lord Śiva-Īśāna, Tatpuruṣa, Aghora, Vāmadeva and Sadyojāta.[1] It further contains the inscription : '*The liṅga of the sons of Khajahuti was dedicated by Nāgasiri, the son of Vasethi. May the deity be pleased.*'' The name Nāgasiri is interesting showing evidently how the Nāga cult was being gradually fused with Śaivism. The inscription is written in Brāhmī characters of the first century B. C.

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[1] Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography* vol. II, Part, i. pp. 66ff.

[2] Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 39; S. Kramrisch, *Indian Sculptures*, p. 35.

Przyluski has shown that the words *lāṅgula* and *liṅga*, the first meaning plough and the second penis, are of Austro-Asiatic origin and in that language they mean one and the same thing. In the Mahābhārata and the *Sūtras*, the word *lāṅgula* actually means both and also the tail of an animal.[2] Thus the *liṅga* associated with Śaivism shows indirectly that the god was also associated with vegetation, as Megasthenes' description of Dionysios would imply. It may be noted in this connection that in the *Śatarudrīya* litany of the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*, Rudra is described as the lord of the forests and the fields,[3] and he is also supposed "to live in the soil and in the threshing floor" and also "in the woods and the bushes.[4]" The account reminds us of the description of Śiva in the early Bengali literature as husking corn in the field.

Let us now turn our attention to the early Indian coins throwing light on the history of the sect. These have been critically studied by J. N. Banerjea who presents us with the following important informations[5] :

(a) On the coins hailing from Taxila and one from Ujjayinī there is representation of (Śiva) *liṅgam*.

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[1] Gopinath Rao, *l.c.* p. 64.

[2] *Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian in India* : ed. P. C. Bagchi, pp. 8ff.

[3] *Vaj. Sam*, xvi. 18.

[4] *Ibid.*, xvi. 33-34.

[5] Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 112ff.

(b) The shrine of Śiva can be detected on the coins of the early Audumbara chiefs.

(c) On some of the Ujjayinī coins, we find the standing figure of Śiva, with a staff in the right hand and a vase in the left. Another variety shows a bull slightly prancing up and looking up at the deity.

(d) On some coins found at the same place, Śiva is represented as standing with three heads.

Though there is room for difference of opinion on the minute interpretation of details, it is almost certain that on the early coins, the god Śiva is represented both anthropomorphically and by his *liṅga* symbol. From the above evidences further the following facts emerge :

(i) that Śaivism was the predominant religion in the western (Ujjayini) and north-western (Taxila and Udumbara) parts of India. In other words, since the time of Megasthenes there has been an extension of the jurisdiction of the cult or sect from the mountainous districts; and,

(ii) that god Śiva combined in himself elements of the Vedic and the Indus valley cultures. It may be noted here that we find at Mohenjo-daro, a three (?)-headed figure on a seal (cf. d. above) which Marshall recognises as a proto-type of Śiva in his aspect as Paśupati, the Lord of Beasts. In this connection Wheeler also observes : "The likelihood that both Śiva and *liṅga* worship have been inherited by the Hindus from the Harappans is perhaps re-inforced by the prevalence of the bull (the vehicle of Śiva) or of bull-like animals amongst the seal symbols; although the veneration which on the same showing was paid in no less degree to the tiger, elephant, rhinoceros, and crocodiles, prevents us from assuming any specific association of the proto-Siva and the bull as early as Harappan times.[1]"

The Czechoslovak scholar Hrozny accepts Marshall's interpretation and reads in the above seal the name of the god Kueya. Thus he states : "The proto-Indian god Kueyash, Kuyash, represented by wild animals like tigers, elephants and others, became the dreaded and the cruel god Rudra-Shiva of later times. In my opinion, his name means Killer, Destroyer. Let us remember that in Indian literature Shiva is the god who desires to kill (Hopkins, *Religions of India*, p. 251). If the etymology of the name Kueyash, Kuyash is correct, the name comes from Hittite which is a Kentum language..and not a Satem one such as old Indian.[2]"

It is difficult to agree with Hrozny for his reading of the Indus seals is merely a tentative one. According to the same scholar further the people who built up the Indus culture were a branch of the Indo-European Hittites who formed a distinct bloc extending from the Asia Minor to the Punjab and Sind, and thus every "major change that took place in Western Asia affected also India." These proto-Indians were swept away by the Dravidians who absorbed their culture and remained in possession of their homeland till they were ousted by the Vedic Aryan invaders. Hrozny's theory has not been generally accepted, but even if we accept it, then it is better to think that the Vedic Aryans accepted the Siva cult through the Dravidians, and not directly from the Indo-Europeans of the Indus valley.

Indeed, there have been many advocates of the theory that Siva was originally a Dravidian god and he gradually found his way into the Aryan pantheon. Thus it is held that the term Śiva itself is the Sanskrit derivation of the Tamil word *Sivan* (*chivan*) meaning red, for, "the divinity was known to the early Aryans as *Nīla-lohita*." Śambhu, another name of the god, has been derived from the Tamil *Sembu* or *Chempu*, meaning copper, i.e. the red metal. It may be noted, however, that Rudra-Śiva is called Nila-Lohita in the later Vedic literature, not in the Ṛg-Veda, though in the Tenth Maṇḍala we have an allusion to Śiva's drinking the poison, the legend that has been developed in the *Purāṇas*. The Tenth Maṇḍala of the Ṛg-Veda is a later collection and hence the legend is evidently a late one. There cannot be any denying of the fact that when Śaivism spread among the Dravidians, it absorbed many traits of those people, but there is at present no sufficient data to prove that the cult was of Dravidian origin. As Keith has remarked : "We must admit that when we come to definite attempts to prove Dravidian influence on Vedic religion or philosophy we are in the region of conjecture. The absence of any really early Dravidian evidence as to cultures deprives us of any assured knowledge of pre-Indo-European conditions such as would enable us effectively to guage Dravidian influences in Vedic religion or philosophy. This needs to the necessity of relying on conjectures, of which many may be easily shown to have no sound foundation, or at least to be mere possibilities. We may of course accept such possibilities if we like, but in doing so we cease to be judicial and arrive merely at subjective judgments which have no lasting value.[1]"

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[1] Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 83.

[2] Hrozny, *Ancient History of Western Asia, India and Crete*, p. 184.

Rudra-Śiva appears to have been a Vedic god and in course of the development of the cult it absorbed evidently many of the peculiarities of the Dravidian and the Indus valley civilisation. We may compare, for example, the Indus valley seal referred to by Sir John Marshall with a coin of Huviṣka, the Kuṣāṇa king, who ruled in the second century A. D.

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[1] Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas*, pp. 629 ff.

The Indus seal :

> A three-faced deity with a horned head dress, seated crosslegged on a throne, with penis-erectus, and surrounded by elephant, tiger, buffalo and rhinoceros, while a deer appears under the seat. The eyes of the deity are turned downwards towards the tip of the nose.

The coin of Huviṣka :

> Śiva facing; three-headed, nimbate; clad only in waist-band; ithyphallic; has four arms and hands, in which are goat, wheel, trident and thunder-bolt.[1]

There are, no doubt, some differences between the Indus valley seal and the coin referred to above, but the *motif* is same in both the cases. Literary references may throw further light on the point but before we deal with them we have to judge clearly whether the figures on the Indus seal as well as on the coin of Huviṣka are really three-faced or four-faced ones. It is not unlikely that the deity is really four-faced having one at the back, and the artist in both the cases could not depict it as he was giving the front side picture of the deity. We make the suggestion because according to the earlier *Tāntric* texts, Tumburu is the name of a Gandharva (i.e., one belonging to the Gandhāra country, lying to the west of the river Indus) with four faces, and, "it seems probable that Tumburu was no other than Śiva himself." As pointed out by P. C. Bagchi, in the Mahābhārata also we have references to the four faces of the god Śiva, and as Tumburu-Śiva is specially associated with the Gandhāra country, it is not unlikely that the tradition of the Indus culture peeped into the Epic days.[1]

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[1] Gardner, *The Coins of the Greek and Scythic kings of Bactria and India*, p. 148.

The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, which has been assigned by competent authorities to fourth-third centuries B. C., throws a flood of light on the history of the Śaiva sect of the period with which we are dealing here. On the nature of the Upaniṣad, R. G. Bhandarkar observes: "It must have been composed before *BhG* (Bhagavad-Gītā), since the latter contains.... a verse and a half from it, and the nature of the religio-philosophic speculations contained in it, though essentially Upaniṣadic, makes a nearer approach to the later *Bhakti* school than those of any of the older treatises of the class. The description of the godhead and the final pure serenity are instinct with the glow of love and admiration, and the treatise ends with an expression of self-surrender to the god who makes himself manifest in one's own intelligence. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, therefore, stands at the door of the *Bhakti* school, and pours its loving admiration on Rudra-Śiva instead of on Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, as the *BhG* (Bhagavad-Gītā) did in later times when the Bhakti doctrine was in full swing. Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa had a historic basis; and the circumstances which led to his being invested with the supreme godhead occurred in later times, while in the age, in which *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* was composed, Rudra-Śiva was alone in the field as the supreme god, and the germs of *Bhakti* or love, which manifested themselves at the time, were directed towards him; but when Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa also came into the field, he appealed more to the hearts of men as the god who had come to dwell amongst them; consequently the germs of Bhakti steadily developed and he became the object of the heightened feelings in preference to the others.[1]"

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[1] P. C. Bagchi, *Tantras*, p. 14.

The above observations naturally centre round the relative antiquity of the Śaiva and the Vaiṣṇava sects. With due deference to the learned historian, we venture to state that the sect of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa with *bhakti* as its pivot appears to have been earlier than the Rudra-Śiva sect. Pāṇini, who possibly lived about 500 B. C., refers to the *bhaktas* of Vāsudeva and Arjuna, while the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* appears to be posterior to the period of the great grammarian. In Śaivism, *bhakti* and *yoga* combine together and the emphasis is laid more on the *yoga* aspect of the cult, and in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* also this *yoga* aspect finds a very prominent mention. In Chapter II of the work, we find how one should fix up his mind by controlling his breath and would then gradually have the perception of the supreme soul. This account is further developed in the *Yoga Sūtra* of Patañjali and is brought in intimate relationship with Śaivism in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*. This chapter has absolutely no sectarian character, which, however, becomes prominent in verse 2 of Chapter III which describes Rudra as the Supreme God (*eko hi Rudra*) and the ruler of this world and as one who has created this world, maintains this world and in the end destroys everything. This philosophy, in fact, pervades the whole of the later Śaiva system, and Śaṃkara thus condemns the Pāśupatas as the upholders of the theory of *nimittakāraṇam*.[2] The influence of the famous *Śatarudrīya*, in which we see for the first time a "deliberate tendency to see in him a god with comprehensive control over all nature," can be found in verses 5 & 6 of the chapter which are the same as verses 2 & 3 of the litany :

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[1] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism* etc., pp. 157-8.

[2] Śaṃkara's *Bhāṣya* on *Brahma-Sūtra*, ii. 2.37.

> "Shine upon us, dweller in the mountains, with that holy body of thine which is auspicious, not terrible and which does not betoken harm. The arrow, O dweller in the mountains, which thou bearest in thy hand to discharge, make it, O Lord of the mountains, auspicious; do not slay men and cattle."

The significance of quoting the couplets by the author of the *Svetāśvatara* evidently lies in the fact that he wants to emphasise upon both the bēnign and the terrible aspects of the god. This is further emphasised in the following concluding verse of Chapter IV which is quoted from the Ṛg-Veda :

> 'Injure us not in our children and descendants, nor in our men, nor in our cattle, nor in our horses. Slay not our warriors in thine anger : we continually worship thee in our offerings[1]."

In verse 11 of the same chapter we possibly find the earliest literary reference to the phallic worship associated with Saivism. Thus it is stated that Īśāna presides (*adhitiṣṭhati*) over every *yoni* and all forms of *yoni*. Here, however, *yoni* is identified with the great *Puruṣa* of the Sāṃkhya,[2] an idea which, as we shall see later on, has been further elucidated in the story of Upamanyu occurring in the Great Epic.[3]

In several places of the Upaniṣad, the term *Bhagavat* is used to denote lord Rudra-Siva.[4] In later works, the term is used exclusively in connection with Vaiṣṇavism, though Patañjali once refers to the Siva-Bhāgavatas. In the Ṛk and the Atharva Vedas the word Bhagavat conveys the meaning of blissful and happy one, and evidently in this sense the term has been used in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* and the *Mahābhāṣya*. The association of the term with Vaiṣṇavism exclusively then must be posterior to *c*. 150 B. C., the date which is generally assigned to Patañjali. This exclusive connotation of the term may be somewhat later even, for it is found in connection with Saivism on the coins of the Kunindas who occupied a narrow strip of land at the foot of the Siwalik hills between the Jumna and the Sutlej and the territory of the upper courses between the Beas and the Sutlej.[1] These coins are assigned to the second or third century A. D. by Allan who observes : "These are large pieces the module of which is suggested by the Kushān copper coins. The reverse revives the old Kuninda type of deer, tree, river etc., and the obverse bears a figure of Śiva holding a trident and the legend : *Bhagavata-chatreśvara-mahātmanaḥ*[2]." J. N. Banerjea observes in this connection : "Does this class of Kuninda coins show that the tribal state of the Kunindas at one time was dedicated to the lord Śiva in the second century A. D. and the coins were issued in his name in the capacity of its sovereign ruler (the title *chatreśvara* is significant) ? We can cite a modern analogy. The real ruler of the Travancore State (till lately) is Lord Padmanābha and the ruling chief acts as his substitute. In mediaeval times, the kingdom of Mewar was also sometimes dedicated to Lord Eklingaji, its patron deity[3]."

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[1] *Ṛg-Veda*, i. 114.8.

[2] *Sāṃkhya* and *Yoga* are actually referred to in Ch. vi. 13 of the work.

[3] Muir, *OST*, iv. p. 161.

[4] Chapter ii. vv. 11, 12, 15, 17, 20; Chapter V. v. 14.

Some such customs may have prevailed also in the period under review, i.e. in the pre-Christian days, as proved by the evidence of the Audumbara coins of the first century B. C. The provenance of the coins shows that "the Audumbaras should be located in the area formed by the eastern part of the modern Kangra district, the Gurudaspur district and the Hoshiarpur district, that is to say, the valley of the Beas, or perhaps the wider region between the upper Sutlej and the Ravi[1]." In these coins the term Mahādeva is used as a regal title (e.g. *Mahādevasa raña Śivadāsasa odu* (*m*) *barisa*). This shows that Śiva was the real ruler of the state, and king Śivadāsa and others carried the work on his behalf or as his incarnation.

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[1] Allan, *A Catalogue of Indian Coins in the British Museum* (Ancient India), pp. 159ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. ciii.

[3] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 118 fn. 1.

From the above discussions it is thus clear that the Pāśupata sect of the Śaivas, along with some other Śaiva sects, existed in North-Western India in the fourth century B. C., while from the evidence of the coins it appears that Śaiva sects were also predominant in Taxila and Ujjayinī. In fact, in the post-Vedic period Śiva became the greatest god of the people along with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa.

The ground was already prepared for the deity's rise, for in the Śatarudrīya Rudra is associated with the mass,[2] while in the same litany it is also ordained that offerings should be made to the god in a place infested with snakes, at a mound of manure because he is lord of cattle, in a river because he lives in waters, at sacred trees, at the place of sacrifice, etc., because he lives "among herds, in cowpens, in beds, in houses, in whirl-pools and in hollows, who abides in caves, in dry things and in green things, in dust, in moistures, in inaccessible places, in creepers, in vaults and in deep vaults." Keith has made the following interesting observations on the above account: "It is clear that this wide extension of his power, which applies to the waters and to the fish in them and to the whole animal and vegetable kingdom, is due to a deliberate tendency to see in him a god with a comprehensive control over all nature[1]."

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[1] Allan, *l.c.*, p. lxxxvi.

[2] Muir, *OST*, iv. p. 270.

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[1] Keith, *loc.*, p. 145.

CHAPTER II

Lakulīśa and his Time

The Mathura Pillar inscription[1] of Candra Gupta II of the year 61=380 A. D. throws interesting sidelight on the condition of Śaivism two centuries earlier than the time of the Gupta monarch, that is, of the time when the Kuṣāṇas were ruling into the interior of India. For the sake of clearness, we quote below lines 5-10 of the epigraph :

> "On this aforesaid (*tithi*—the fifth of the bright half of the first Āṣāḍha of the year 61 following the Gupta era), (the *Liṅgas*) Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara (comprising the portraits of) the teachers were installed in the Teacher's shrine."
>
> "Ārya Uditācārya, tenth from Bhagavat Kuśika, fourth from Bhagavat Parāśara, a stainless disciple's disciple of the Bhagavat Kapila, for the commemoration of the preceptors and for the augmentation of the religious merit of the self."[2]

While editing the record Bhandarkar observed : "We have seen that the inscription specially mentions Uditācārya as *daśama* or tenth in descent from Kuśika and fourth from Parāśara. While the teachers intervening between Parāśara and Uditācārya are mentioned and are only two, those between Kuśika and Parāśara are not mentioned at all though they are no less than five. In fact, there was no need of mentioning Kuśika at all unless we suppose that he was the most important personage of the line to which Uditācārya belonged, we are therefore compelled to infer that Kuśika, though he may not have propounded any new religious system, must have at least originated a line of teachers to which pertained Parāśara, Kapila, Upamita and Udita. Who could this Kuśika be? There can be but only one reply to this question. Years ago I had occasion to point out who Lakuli was. Lakuli was a great puzzle to scholars and archaeologists, I first drew their attention to a passage which is common to both the *Vāyu-* and the *Liṅga-Purāṇa*. On the strength of this passage I showed: (1) that Lakuli was the last incarnation of Maheśvara, (2) that this incarnation took place at Kāyārohaṇa or Kāyāvatāra which is identical with Karva, in the Dabhoi taluk, Baroda Prant, Baroda State, and (3) that he had four ascetic pupils, namely Kuśika, Gārga, Mitra and Kauruṣya.[1]" Identifying Kuśika of the above epigraph with Kuśika, the pupil of Lakuli and allowing 25 years to each generation upto Uditācārya whose known date is 380 A. D., Bhandarkar thinks that "we have to assign Lakuli to A. D. 105-30.[2]"

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[1] *Ep. Ind.* xxi, pp. 1ff; *Select Ins*, pp. 269ff.

[2] *Ep. Ind.* xxi, p. 9.

The important position of the Lakulīśa sub-sect in the early centuries of the Christian era is further illustrated by the *Pāśupata Sūtra*[3] which is supposed to have been taught by Lakuli to his pupil Kuśika who came from the Brahmāvarta country to receive his blessings. R. Anantakrishna Sastri places the work "about 100-200 A. D." The same scholar gives the following description of the Sūtra-book:

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[3] *Pāśupata Sūtras* with *Pañchārthabhāshya* of Kauṇḍinya, ed. R. A. Sastri, Trivandrum, 1940.

"The whole text consists of 168 *sūtras* grouped into five parts depending on the five popular *mantras*, viz., *Sadyojāta*, *Vāmadeva*, *Aghora*, *Tatpuruṣa* and *Īśāna*. The language is simple and any ordinary student of Sanskrit can understand the meaning. All the five sections of the *sūtras* are devoted to instructions to students how to pray to god here and to reach the presence of the Lord Rudra (*Rudra-sāyujya*) hereafter. There is no description in the *sūtras* of the mythological heavens like Kailāsa or Vaikuṇṭha. They never refer to the *Karma* theory or give an elaborate instruction of cumbersome ceremonies to follow. There is no mention of the transmigratory life, *punarajanma*, such as faithfully described in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* known as *Pañcāgnividyā*. *Saguṇa* or *Nirguṇa*, the conditioned or the unconditioned, theories of god are also missing in this work. The only one symbol *Om* was mentioned to meditate upon in the heart. This system we may safely call 'a common system' to suit all people* at all times as there are no aggressive elements in it."[1]

The Pāśupata Śaivism as described in the work is, however, different from the one narrated in the *Dakṣa* story of the Epic to which we shall refer later on. The Epic Pāśupatism decries the *varṇāśramadharma*, while the *Pāśupata Sūtra* enjoins that a devotee should not talk to a Śūdra or a female and if by chance he touches any one of them he should perform the *prāṇāyāma* and then mutter the *Raudrī Gāyatrī* or the name of *Vahurūpī*, which as Kauṇḍinya explains, is the name of Aghora, one of the five forms of Śiva.[2] This Lakulīśa-Pāśupatism was thus of an orthodox character, though equally with the heterodox one, it laid special emphasis on *yoga*. In fact, the book opens with the *Sūtra* : *Athātaḥ Pāśupateḥ Pāsupataṃ yoga-vidhiṃ vyākhyāsyāmaḥ*. Another special feature of the sect is that it lays special emphasis on *bhakti*[1] and states that the god should be meditated in the heart,[2] while at the same time it prescribes rules to be followed by a devotee, some of which may appear to be mystical to us. Thus it is ordained that a Pāśupata ascetic should besmear his body three times with ashes,[3] should live in a lone house or in a cave or a cremation ground[4], should have the senses under control[5] and should live by begging.[6] The eating of meat is sanctioned provided the food is not procured by himself killing the animal.[7] He should live in a single garment[8] and should behave in a fashion so that he may be condemned by ordinary men.[9] We need not enlarge the account here, but may note the fact that in this Pāśupatism we meet with many practices that may be detected in the life of the left-hand Śāktas.

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* It is doubtful whether a Śūdra could follow this religion.

[1] *Ibid.*, Intro, pp. 11-12.

[2] *Ibid.*, i. 13-17.

It is further ordained that a true Pāśupata should be a *liṅgadhārī*[10], the exact meaning of which is not clear. Kauṇḍinya takes the term '*liṅga*' in the sense of distinctive features and enjoins that a *sanyāsī* should carry *daṇḍa*, *kamaṇḍalu* etc. by which his true character may be known to people. It is not, however unlikely that the writer of the *sūtras* means that a Pāśupata should carry a *Sivaliṅga* with him, as some of the Liṅgāyats do even at the present time.

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[1] *Ibid.*, ii. 20.

[2] *Ibid.*, v. 25.

[3] *Ibid.*, i. 2.

[4] *Ibid.*, v. 9 & 30.

[5] *Ibid.*, v. 11.

[6] *Ibid.*, v. 14.

[7] *Ibid.*, v. 16.

[8] *Ibid.*, i. 10.

[9] *Ibid.*, iv. 14.

[10] *Ibid.*, i. 6.

As the *Pāśupata Sūtra* embodying the tenets of the orthodox class is stated to have been promulgated by Lakuli who lived at the beginning of the second century A. D. when India was under the domination of the foreigners, we may hazard the conjecture here that the heterodox Pāśupatas who observed no caste barrier became impure by imbibing alien customs and thus it became necessary to check the impurities in the sect and this was done by the reformer Lakuli. In this light also we can understand why the heterodox Pāśupatas are condemned by the orthodox class as shown by the story of Dakṣa's sacrifice in the Epic, to which we may now turn our attention.

* * * *

Most of the references to Śaivism in the Great Epic appear to be late in date, and as it is supposed that the work reached its final shape about 300 A. D., we may tentatively place these accounts in the early centuries of the Christian era, i.e., within the period with which we are dealing here. Farquhar has shown that the Epic account of Śaivism may be grouped under the following headings[1] :

(a) *Narratives* (III, 38-41; VII, 80-81 etc.) : "telling us how this or that hero went and praised Śiva in order to receive from him some heavenly weapon of war of peculiar effectiveness, and they are of minor interest."

(b) *Hymns of Praise* : "Which are valuable because we see the new teaching reflected in them most clearly."

(c) *Śaiva theology* : (XII, 285ff; XIII, 160-4).

For an account of the heterodox Pāśupata sects we may turn to the story of Dakṣa's sacrifice (XII, 283ff) which has been assigned by eminent authorities to 2nd—3rd. centuries A. D., and which has been a matter of great discussion among the scholars. Thus Nārāyana Ayyar says : "In this story, the opposition between the Viṣṇu-bhaktas, of whom Dakṣa was apparently one (for he glorifies Viṣṇu as the lord of all), and the Śiva-bhaktas, like Dadhīci, is clearly evidenced. But it is when we examine the account of the same incident in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (IV, 2-7), that the rivalry between the two schools becomes more clearly expressed.[1]" The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is a late work of *c*. 9th century A. D. and hence an interpretation of the Epic with its help would be unhistorical, specially when we find that in the Epic itself Viṣṇu glorifies the god Śiva as *Makhaghna* or 'destroyer of sacrifices'.[2] R. P. Chanda sees in the account references to un-Aryan elements in Śaivism, which was not recognised by the orthodox Aryan society.[3] But in that case we fail to understand how Vaiṣṇavism came to be lauded in the Epic for that religion also, as Chanda himself points out, was not free from such elements. In order to understand the true implication of the account, we may turn to the story itself :

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[1] Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, pp. 101f.

> "Dakṣa-Prajāpati made arrangements for a great sacrifice in which all the gods were invited except Maheśvara or Śiva, the son-in-law of Dakṣa. When Umā, the wife of Śiva and the daughter of Dakṣa, took exception to the behaviour of her father, Maheśvara is represented as consoling her with the following words : "Oh ! highly blessed lady, the gods in the days of yore made a contract by virtue of which no share was allotted to me of offerings in all sacrifices.

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[1] Narayana Ayyar, *Śaivism in South India*, p. 64.
[2] *Mbh.* vii. 50.54ff.
[3] Chanda, *Indo-Aryan Races*, pp. 126ff.

According to that agreement, O fair one, the gods do not give me, following the old custom, any share of the sacrificial offerings[1]."

From the above words of Śiva, it is quite clear that Śaivism as presented in the above account of the Epic was something different from the Vedic worship of Rudra. This becomes further clear from the following words of Dakṣa who justifies his own action in excluding Śiva from the sacrifice : "We have many Rudras armed with lances and having matted locks on their heads. They are eleven in number. I know them all. But I do not know who this Maheśvara is[2]."

The story then continues as follows : When Umā pointed out to Śiva the great indignation to which he had been dragged down by the action of Dakṣa, Mahādeva created from his mouth a dreadful being whose very sight could make one's hair erect, and who passed by the name of Vīrabhadra. Similarly, it is stated that another female figure known as Mahākālī came out of the body of Umā, and Vīrabhadra and Mahākālī' together went and destroyed the sacrifice of Dakṣa. Dakṣa became bewildered and began propitiating Śiva who then made Dakṣa understand the true implication of the religion of the sect in the following words :

> "With the help of reasonable arguments, the gods and the *dānavas* have formed from the Vedas consisting of the six branches and from the philosophies of the *Saṃkhya* and *Yoga* a creed, by virtue of which they have practised the austerest penances for many long years. The religion, however, which I have found is peerless, and productive of benefits on every side...It is opposed to the duties sanctioned

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[1] *Mbh*, XII. 283. 26-27.

[2] *Ibid.*, XII. 284.20.

by the four orders of men and the four modes of life, and agrees with those duties only in a few particulars.. In the days of yore, O Dakṣa, this auspicious religion called Pāśupata had been found out by me. The proper observance of that religion produces great benefit.[1]"

From the above story it appears that in the Didactic section of the Epic, we have mainly an account of the Pāśupata form of Śaivism which was opposed to the Vedic practices and the so-called *varṇāśramadharma* and herein evidently lies the secret of the story. The orthodox society was based on the *varṇāśramadharma*, and any creed based on its negation was evidently repugnant to the orthodox eyes. The Epic clearly shows that there had already arisen a class that recognised no caste-barrier, and recognised *yoga* as the chief path of emancipation, for while speaking of *yoga* "it is said, xii 319.89., that it is a doctrine of emancipation for all and knowledge is to be got from all, for all castes are Brāhmaṇas, all are born equal.[2]"

The description how Vīrabhadra and Mahākālī came out of the bodies of Śiva and Umā respectively is indeed very interesting. From the account of Vīrabhadra's figure it is clear that he was ghastly in shape, and thus it has been inferred that originally he was a Dravidian deity merged later on in the Śaiva pantheon, and in the present time he is still to be found in 'one of the most remarkable sculptures' at Elephanta.[3] The figure in question has been considered by some, however, as that of Bhairava. Hopkins thinks that he was originally a local genius "raised eventually to be a form of Śiva, with four, six or two thousand arms, as Khaṇḍava is now a form of Śiva[1]." Mahākālī, on the other hand, may have been a goddess of the Proto-Austroloids and later on came to be identified with the wife of Śiva[2].

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[1] *Ibid.*, xii. 285. 122-25.

[2] Hopkins, *The Great Epic of India*, p. 114, fn. 2.

[3] *ERE*, vol. v. p. 262.

The Pāśupata sect, in any case, was undoubtedly the most important one, as the story of Dakṣa shows, in the early centuries of the Christian era. The term Paśupati, literally meaning the lord of flocks, is given a new interpretation according to which man is the *paśu*, who is fettered with *pāśa*, and Śiva is the lord or *pati*, whose grace releases the creature from 'bondage.' The influence of the non-classical and "theistic" *Sāṃkhya* doctrine is, however, apparent on the sect.[3] As S. K. De observes: "The reference to *Sāṃkhya-Yoga* is not surprising; for the Epic *Sāṃkhya-yoga* was the dominating philosophy, which was common property of Epic sectarian faiths. Śiva himself is said to be *Sāṃkhya-Yogārthada* as well as a Yoga-lord (*Yogādhyaksha*) while Nārāyaṇa of the Pāñcarātras is said to be *niṣṭhā* or object of worship of *Sāṃkhya-Yoga*, which is described as *Nārāyaṇa-parā*. This proto-*Sāṃkhya-Yoga* was apparently a curious medley not only to two divergent systems but also of unrelated ideas from other sources; in fact, it was a loose but convenient a term to describe the confused philosophical thought of the Epic. It is not...classical *Sāṃkhya-Yoga* for the Epic Sāṃkhya is made theistic by postulating a twenty-sixth principle called Iśvara, added to the original twenty-five of *Sāṃkhya*, while the more orthodox *Yoga* accepts spiritual aloofness (*Kevalatva*) as the goal. Whatever may have been the philosophical background it is probable that the Pāśupatas, like the Pāñcarātra and Bhāgavata faiths, emphasised emotional realisation more than mere knowledge; for it is declared (xiii 14. 188.) that the system was freed from logical disputation.[1]"

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[1] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 227fn.

[2] vide, *infra*.

[3] This *Sāṃkhya* is clearly different from the philosophical system as propounded in the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* of Īśvarakriṣṇa.

Indeed, in the early centuries of the Christian era, the Pāśupatas witnessed a flourishing period in the patronage they received from the royal personalities, Indian as well as foreign. It was the age when the foreign rulers exercised their supremacy over the Indus valley countries, and it was exactly in this region that the Pāśupatas were very strong. They not only captured the imagination of these foreign potentates, but by coming into contact with the foreigners imbibed many foreign elements into their cult.

It must be remembered at the outset that while the Saiva sects in general had matted locks and used iron lances, the Pāśupatas had an additional insignia in the fact that they used skin garments. J. N. Banerjea thinks that the male figure holding "club and trident" on the coins of Maues may represent Śiva.[2] In it we have possibly an evidence of the existence of a non-Pāśupata Śaiva sect. A non-Paśupata sect is similarly focussed on the coins of Gondopharnes representing the figure of Śiva with a long trident in the right hand and with faint traces of *jaṭā* on the head. On some specimens of the same king, however, Śiva holds a skin garment in his left hand showing that the foreign ruler had respect for the Pāśupata sect as well. On the coins of Kadphises I, Śiva is sometimes represented with a skin upper garment while on the gold coins of Kadphises II we find the figure of the deity with a trident-battle-axe in the right hand, and the king is given the title of Mahīśvara.

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[1] *Our Heritage*, vol. i. Pt. i. p. 12 (1953).

[2] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 120.

The above accounts clearly demonstrate the fact that in the early centuries of the Christian era Śaivism was very strong in western and north-western India. In this connection we may note further the humped Indian bull on the Greco-Indian coins issued from the mint at Puṣkalāvatī. The fact is interesting for Śiva was known to the Greeks as the god of Gandhāra. It is not unlikely that this foreign patronage helped in the rise of the different sub-sects among the Śaivas.

Seals unearthed at Bhita, Basarh and other places of Eastern India show that the Śaiva sects were in a flourishing state in that region also. Most of these belonged to the Gupta period, but a few of the pre-Gupta age presents some interesting facts. Thus the oval seal No. 39 discovered at Basarh bears on it the legend "*namaḥ Paśupateḥ*", showing that the Pāśupata form of Śaivism was strong in Eastern India. From the Mahābhārata, it appears, on the other hand, that in the same region a form of Pāśupata Śaivism prevailed which sanctioned human sacrifice. Thus Kṛṣṇa informs Yudhiṣṭhira, who had been arranging the performance of a Rājasūya sacrifice, that "whilst the powerful Jarāsandha lives, a Rājasūya sacrifice cannot be attained by thee; such, O king, is my opinion. For all the kings have been conquered and are imprisoned by him in the Girivraja, as elephants by a lion in the cave of a great mountain. For this monarch Jarāsandha desires to sacrifice to the glorious Mahādeva, the lord of Umā, with these kings as victims, and they are conquered by him after he had worshipped the god with dreadful austerities...In this manner Jarāsandha has reduced to subjection at least a hundred persons; how then can a feeble prince approach him? What pleasure can these princes have in existence, when they have been devoted to slaughter and designated as victims like beast in the temple of

Paśupati.[1]"

The above account clearly shows that in ancient Magadha of which Girivraja-Rājagṛha was the capital, there prevailed a form of Śiva worship in which human sacrifices were offered and in which at the same time the devotees practised dreadful austerities. The Mahābhārata states that these unfortunate princes were confined in the house of Paśupati (*Paśupater gṛhe*), and can we infer from it that the Śaivism of Eastern India was of the heterodox Pāśupata type and that the image of the god was also kept in the temple?

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From the above discussions, the following facts emerge regarding the condition of Śaiva sects in the Scytho-Kuṣāṇa age:

(a) The Pāśupata form of Śaivism prevailed in the north-Western part of India and in the present state of Bihar.

(b) A new sub-sect of the Pāśupatas came into existence about the early years of the second century A. D. under a teacher named Lakuli. Later traditions state that Lakuli lived in the country of Lāṭa, the Kathiawad region, which in the second century A. D. was under the rule of the Śaka-Kṣatrapas of Ujjayinī. It was thus under Scythian patronage that the new sub-sect grew up. One particular feature of this sub-sect, as it appears from the evidence of the *Pāśupata Sūtra*, was that it did not admit the Śūdras within its fold.

(c) Numismatic evidences clearly prove that in this age the Śaivas or the Pāśupatas were very tolerant and joining hands with other sects specially the

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[1] Muir, *OST*, iv., pp. 244f.

Śāktas and the Vaiṣṇavas (*infra*). As all such evidences are derived from the Kuṣāṇa coins, it is not unlikely that the Kuṣāṇa kings, who showed a great deal of eclecticism in matters of religion, helped in bringing about the reconciliation to some extent.

CHAPTER III

The Lakulīśa-Pāśupatas

The epigraphic records prove beyond doubt that Śaivism was a great religion in the post-Kuṣāṇa period as well. The Bhāraśivas were strong followers of the faith, while among the Gupta rulers who generally favoured Vaiṣṇavism we find at least one, the emperor Vainya Gupta, described as *Bhagavān Mahādeva-pādānudhyāta* in the Gunaighar record. The epigraphs of the Gupta age throw interesting light on the condition of the sect, and we may note them here chronologically as far as possible.

It would be noted at the outset that beginning from this period the distinction between the orthodox and the heterodox Pāśupatas was gradually disappearing and the two were now coming nearer borrowing traits from each other. In fact, in later works the orthodox Lakulīśa sect has been regarded as a heterodox one and we often find the use of the expressions like Lakulīśa-Pāśupatas signifying thereby the Pāśupatas with all their sub-branches.

It has already been stated that the Mathura inscription of Candra Gupta II of the year 380 A. D. records the installation of "(the *liṅgas*) Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara (comprising the portraits of) the teachers" in the Teacher's shrine[1]. We have to determine at the outset what is exactly meant by the expression *Gurvv-āya- tana* or "Teacher's shrine", and secondly, what is the significance of giving the portraits of the teachers Upamita and Kapila on these two *liṅgas*. Regarding the *Gurvv-āya-tana* Bhandarkar thinks that it was a "shrine which comprised the *liṅgas* set up in the name and to the memory of the *gurus* of that lineage to which Uditācārya belonged,[1]" while regarding the portraits he observes that the followers of Lakuli, the founder of the Lakulīśa sub-sect of Pāśupata Śaivism, were all great *yogīs*, "and it is well-known that when a *yogī* passes away, he does not die like an ordinary mortal with his last breath going out of his earthly nostril, but rather by a *yoga* feat which enables him to pass it through the *brahma-randhra*, that is by breaking his human skull. It is only in this manner that he is absorbed into Brahman if he is a Vedāntist, or into Śiva, if he is a Pāśupata or Māheśvara.[2]" The pictures thus represent how the teachers Upamita and Kapila became absorbed into Śiva after death. Thus the *liṅga* here represents the god Śiva himself, and so the *liṅga* in this case can hardly be regarded as a mere *phallic* emblem.

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[1] *Ep. Ind*, xxi, p. 8.

It is further clear from the above epigraph that Parāśara, Upamita, Kapila and Udita were Pāśupata teachers who evidently flourished in the Gupta age, and the Lakulīśa sub-sect thereby gained great strength by their preachings. A. S. Altekar draws our attention to "a sculpture at Mathura belonging to our period showing a devotee offering his own head to Śiva,[3]" and from this he infers that possibly in this period the Pāśupata religion came to be associated with the practice of human sacrifice. We have already shown that human sacrifices were offered to Śiva in the earlier age in the region of Magadha and this Śaivism was possibly of the Pāśupata type[1]. Evidently this type of Śaivism became prevalent in parts of the Madhyadeśa during the Gupta period.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[3] *A New History of the Indian People*, vi, p. 374.

The Udayagiri Cave inscription of Candra Gupta II records that the Emperor's Minister of Peace and War Vīrasena Śāba of Pāṭaliputra dedicated a cave temple to the god Śiva[2]. The inscription is interesting as it shows the toleration of the Gupta monarch who was a Vaiṣṇava by faith, but had under him a Śaiva officer. Similarly, Pṛthivīsena, the commander-in-chief of Kumāra Gupta I, dedicated a Śiva-*liṅgam* at Karamdanda in G. E. 117.[3] Other *liṅgas* of the Gupta period have been discovered at Sankargadh, Khoh and Bhumra.[4] These *liṅgas* are all of the *ekamukha* type but the most interesting specimen of the age is the *caturmukha-liṅga*, now preserved in the Ajmer Museum, having the figures of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Sūrya. In the fourth Damodarpur Copper plate we have a reference to the *nāma-liṅga*[5], while as already stated the Gunaighar record shows that a later Imperial Gupta monarch had given up the faith of his predecessors and had become a Śaiva[6].

Of the contemporary rulers, the Gwalior inscription of Mihirakula shows that he was a worshipper of the god Paśupati,[7] while from the epigraphic records we learn that many of the Vākāṭakas, Nalas, Kadambas, Śālaṅkāyanas, Maitrakas, etc. were Śaivas. Some of the records are very interesting and we may note them here :

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[1] *Supra*, p. 123.

[2] Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 272.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 282.

[4] *ASIR*(w), 1919-20, pp. 104-5; Pl. xxviii-xxix; 1920-21, pp. 96-7, Pl. xxii(b).

[5] The exact nature of nāma liṅga is not clear. It may have been a Śiva Liṅga.

[6] Sircar, *Select Ins.*, p. 331.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 400ff.

(a) An inscription informs us that one Iśvarā, the wife of a petty ruler at Jālandhara, constructed a temple of Śiva in memory of her husband[1]. Jālandhara was a centre of Śāktaism, and one of the four original Śākta *pīṭhas* of India[2]. In every Śākta *pīṭha*, we find a sanctuary of Śiva, and the above inscription is probably the earliest record showing a Śaiva sanctuary in a Śākta *pīṭha*.

(b) The inscriptions of the Viṣṇukuṇḍin kings refer to the Lord Śrīparvatasvāmin, who evidently was the family deity of the dynasty. Śrīparvata has been identified with Śrī-Śaila in the Kurnool district. According to the Śaiva traditions, Mallikārjuna, one of the twelve *Jyotirliṅgas*, is associated with Śrī-Śaila. It is not unlikely that when the conception of the twelve *Jyotirliṅgas* evolved, the Viṣṇukuṇḍin deity Śrīparvatasvāmin became included in the list. It may be noted in this connection that Mahākāla of Ujjaiyinī, another *Jyotirliṅga*, is mentioned in the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa who lived in the Gupta age.

(c) On the seals of the copper plate grants of the Pallavas appears the figure of bull, while it is stated that the banner of the dynasty was *khaṭvāṅga-dhvaja* i. e., the banner bearing the representation of a club with a skull at the top. It will be seen later on that the Kāpālika sub-sect of the Pāśupatas used to carry human skulls with them[3], and in the banner of the Pallavas we have evidently the earliest sign of the existence of this sub-sect.

Our chief literary source for studying the history of

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[1] *Ep. Ind.* i, pp. 12ff; Bhandarkar, no. 1790.

[2] P. C. Bagchi, *Tantras*, p. 48.

[3] *Infra*, p. 137.

Śaivism in this period is the *Vāyu-Purāṇa*. As Winternitz says : "This appears in some lists under the name Śaiva or Śiva *Purāṇa*, a title which is given to the work because it is dedicated to the worship of the god Śiva. A *Purāṇa* proclaimed by the Wind-God, i.e., a *Vāyu-Purāṇa* is guoted in the Mahābhārata as well as in the *Harivaṃśa*, and the *Harivaṃśa* in many cases agrees literally with our *Vāyu Purāṇa*. It has already been mentioned that the poet Bāṇa (*c.* 625 A. D.) had a *Vāyu Purāṇa* read to him, and that in this *Purāṇa* the rule of the Guptas is described as it was in the 4th century A. D. There certainly existed an ancient *Purāṇa* under this name, and undoubtedly there is still preserved in our texts much of the ancient work, which is probably not later than the 5th century A. D.[1]"

In Chapter 23 of the work we get an account of 28 *avatāras* of Śiva, clearly a copy of the Viṣṇu-*avatāras* as found in the Great Epic. It also mentions incidentally where these *avatāras* appeared, thus showing indirectly the regions where Śaivism prevailed. The places are as follows : the Himālaya mountain, Gaṅgādvāra; the Haimaka forest, the Gandhamādana range of the Himālaya, the Gautama forest, Gokarṇa, the Devadāru forest, Vārāṇasī, Kālañjara, Naimiṣa, Koṭivarṣa, Rudravaṭa and Kāyārohaṇa.

The epigraphic evidences also associated many of the above places with Śaivism thereby proving the correctness of the Purāṇic tradition. Thus a Basarh seal bearing on its upper part a *liṅga* and a *triśūla* on each side have in Gupta characters the legend *Āmratakeśvara*.[2] According to the *Matsya Purāṇa* Āmratakeśvara was one of the eight principal Śaiva shrines of Benares. Two seals discovered by Marshall at Bhita show the representation of the *liṅga* on them and bear the legend *Kālañjara-bhaṭṭārakasya* and *K(ā)la(ñ)jara* in Gupta characters[1]. The presence of Śaivism in Koṭivarṣa in the Gupta period is proved by the reference to the *nāma-liṅga* possibly in the fourth Dāmodarpur Copper plates, referred to above, while regarding Kāyārohaṇa the *Vāyu Purāṇa* states that Śiva in the last of his incarnations entered a human body left unguarded in a cremation ground at Kāyārohaṇa and "will appear as an ascetic named Nakuli or Club-bearer. Nakuli would be accompanied by his four disciples Kuśika, Gārgya, Mitra and Ruṣṭa. They will practise Māheśvara *yoga* and will ultimately go to the Rudraloka.[2]" We have already seen that Nakula or Lakuli flourished during the first half of the second century A. D., as proved by the Mathura inscription of Candra Gupta II. R. G. Bhandarkar draws our attention to two later inscriptions that throw light on the above account :—

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[1] Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, vol. i. pp. 553-4.

[2] *ASIR*, 1903-4, pp. 104ff.

(i) "An inscription in the temple of Nātha, near that of Ékliṅgaji, fourteen miles to the north of Udayapura, Rajputana, states that Śiva became incarnate as a man with a club (*lakula*) in his hand in the country of Bhṛgukarccha being propitiated by Bhṛgu. Sages Kuśika and others conversant with the Pāśupata *yoga*, and using ashes and wearing bark-dress and matted hair, are mentioned."

(ii) "The Cintra *praśasti* states that Śiva became incarnate in the form of Bhaṭṭāraka Śrī Lakulīśa, and dwelt at Kāyārohaṇa in the Lāṭa country. There appeared in bodily form four pupils of his of the names of Kuśika, Gārgya, Kauruṣa and Maitreya for the strict performance of the

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[1] *Ibid.*, 1911-12, pp. 20ff.

[2] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism* etc., pp. 165ff.

Pāśupata vows, and they became originator of four branches."

The description of the *Vāyu Purāṇa* has got certain interesting features. Thus it is stated that in his eighth incarnation Śiva would appear with his four disciples Kapila, Āsuri, Pañcaśikha and Bāgvali. The first three are reputed *Sāṃkhya* teachers and here evidently we find how Pāśupata system has been brought into intimate connection with the *Sāṃkhya* and *Yoga* philosophy, while Chapter XI of the work enumerates the principles of the Pāśupata *yoga*.

Another feature of the description is that in each *kalpa* Śiva appeared along with his four disciples. Here we have evidently an indirect influence of the Vaiṣṇava *vyūha* theory. Śiva, however, is not a member of the *vyūha* because he is the supreme being, but Kṛṣṇa is a member of the Vaiṣṇava counterpart because he is considered merely as one-fourth part of Viṣṇu.[1] It may be mentioned in this connection that in the *Prapañcasāra Tantra*, Viṣṇu is actually kept outside the *vyūha* which is formed by Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. The four attendants of Śiva are described always as *ūrdhvaretasaḥ*, *pāśupatastapasvinaḥ*, and *bhasmadhūlitavigrahaḥ*, showing the austere nature of the penance practised by the Pāśupatas of the age.

Another important Śaiva work of the age is the commentary on the *Pāśupata Sūtra* by Kauṇḍinya who might have lived "between the 4th and 6th century." R. Ananta Krishna Sastri points out that Kauṇḍinya "uses in his work freely verses from Pāśupata śāstras without mentioning the names. Since he refers to different readings for these sūtras, it is probable there might have been one or two predecessors. At times he refers to the Upanishad system.[1]"

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[1] *Mbh.*, xii, 381. 62.

Kauṇḍinya states in detail how Śiva in the form of Lakuli took his birth in an Agnihotra family and then came to Ujjayinī and taught Kuśika, an inhabitant of the Brahmāvarta country. Of the five popular mantras, viz., *Sadyojāta*, *Vāmadeva*, *Aghora*, *Tatpuruṣa* and *Iśāna*, the commentator lays special importance on the first one. From his commentary further it appears that the life of a Pāśupata *Upāsaka* is divided into several well-defined stages;..in the *first* stage, he has to pass through a formulated course of training to make himself a true *yogī* with full control over his body and mind; in the *second* one, he will give up all outward practices and will live in the society ignored by others. This will ultimately create in his mind an aversion for the social life. He may also assume an uncouth outward appearance which may bring upon him indignation and abuses, and this will create in him further aversion for the worldly life, and thus indirectly help him in realising his goal in the path of his *sādhanā*; in the *third* stage, he will live in the cremation grounds etc. to conquer fully the mind and senses. The full implication of the course is that he will come to realise that in this world everything including his own mortal coil, is a transitory one. Here he would live fixing his mind on Pāśupati; the *last* stage consists in absolute renunciation and fixing of the mind on God without any regard for the surroundings.

As Kauṇḍinya explains, there are *pañcārthas* or five chief principles involved in the system : (i) the recognition of the Lord or *Pati* as the supreme cause, (ii) *Kārya* or effects i.e., the *jīvas*, (iii) the *yogavidhis* by means of which the *jīvas* become united with the Lord : (iv) *yama-*

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[1] *Pāśupatasūtra*, Intro. p. 13.

vidhi or the rules of conduct to be followed by the *sādhaka*; and (v) *duḥkhānta* or the end of misery, which is the aim of all the Indian systems.

S. N. Das Gupta, who has made a critical study of the work, observes thus :—

> "A survey of the Pāśupata Sūtras with Kauṇḍinya's *bhāṣya* leads us to believe that it is in all probability the same type of Lakulīśa-Pāśupata system as referred to by Mādhava in his Sarvadarśana-Saṃgraha in the fourteenth century. It may also be the same system of Pāśupatas as referred to by Śaṃkara in his *bhāṣya* on the second book of the second chapter of the *Brahma-Sūtra*...Here we have monotheism, but not monism or pantheism or panentheism. It may also be pointed out that the Pāśupata system as represented in this work is a Brāhmaṇical system. For it is only Brahmins who could be initiated to the Pāśupata doctrines, but at the same time it seems to break off from Brāhmaṇism in a variety of ways. It does not recommend any of the Brāhmaṇical rites, but it initiates some new rites and new ways of living which are not so common in the Brāhmaṇical circle. It keeps some slender contact with Brāhmaṇism by introducing the meditation on the syllable *Om*. But as regards many of its other rituals it seems to be entirely non-Vedic. It does not refer to any of the Dravidian works as its source books and yet it cannot be identified with the Pāśupata system of Śrīkaṇṭha or the *Vāyavīya-Saṃhitā*.[1]"

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[1] Das Gupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. v., pp. 142-3.

CHAPTER IV

The Pāśupatas and Some Minor Sub-Sects

The Chapter VII of the *Śāntiparvan* of the Great Epic, which may be assigned to 3rd-4th centuries A. D., records the account of a new Śaiva sect which was almost akin to the left-hand Śāktas of the later days in many respects. The account runs thus :—

> "Aśvatthāmā had been worshipping Śiva-Mahādeva. First, he uttered a hymn in honour of the god and then was on the point of offering his own self as a sacrifice to the deity, when a golden chariot descended from the heaven in which there were a blazing fire and creatures of various sorts having burning mouths and eyes, many feet and arms, with faces of bears, tigers, crows etc. Some of these creatures were drinkers of blood and fat, while some were of very short stature and some very high."

The description is too long to be summed up here, but what is stated in *verse* 45 is very significant :—

"Having worshipped the trident-horned deity with Vedic recitations, with *brahmacarya*, with ascetic austerities, and with self-restraint they had secured the companionship of Bhava."

The description of the companions of Śiva shows that they were mythical figures and as it is stated that they attained the position after worshipping the god with the

Vedic recitations, it is to be inferred that there arose among the orthodox Śaivas a new sub-sect that became associated with various horrible practices, inasmuch as it is stated that these creatures were the drinkers of blood and fat, which clearly reminds us of the *Aghorapanthins* of the later days. Indeed, among the Aghorapanthins also we find a sub-sect that followed Vedic injunctions specially the Atharva Veda, as we shall see later on. Evidently in the Mahābhārata we have got an account of the forerunners of such Aghorapanthins.

We now turn to the *Kāpālika* sub-sect of the Pāśupatas. The Kāpālikas are also known as the Aghorīs inasmuch as their chief god is the Aghora form of Śiva. At present they often migrate from one place to another and their number is very few in India, but their very presence often creates horror in the society. This is because of the practices followed by the members of this sect. The term Kāpālika itself is significant meaning "skull-men" from the fact that they wear a garland of skull or simply carry a skull with them. They must therefore be included within the group of the left-hand Tāntrikas. The earliest account of the Kāpālikas possibly comes from the narratives of the Chinese traveller Yuan Chwang, who, while speaking of the country of Kāpiśa says that there was a sect that "wear wreaths of skulls as head ornaments.[1]" In the succeeding sections while speaking of the dress of the Indians, the same traveller observes that "some adorned themselves with a necklace of skulls.[2]" Here we have undoubtedly references to the Kāpālika sub-sect of the Pāśupatas. The Kāpālikas also used human skulls as cups and vessels. It may be noted in this connection that such a custom was prevalent

[1] Watters, *On Yuan Chwang*, i. p. 123.

[2] *Ibid.*, i. p. 148.

among the Yueh-Chi of Central Asia, and according to Levi, among the old Germans and the Celts.[1] They practised the horrible system of cannibalism and of eating of filth.

In the *Saṃkara-Digvijaya*, Ujjayinī is described as a stronghold of the sect. In the same work, however, the Kāpālikas are divided into two distinct groups, Brāhmaṇic and non-Brāhmaṇic. This division evidently points to the fact that the first recognised the caste-system and the Vedas while the second ignored both. This possibly becomes clear from a study of the Nirmand Copper-plate inscription of Samudrasena recording the allotment of the village of Sulīśagrāma by the king to a body of Brāhmaṇas who studied the Atharva Veda at the *agrahāra* of Nirmanda, for the purpose of the god Tripurāntaka or Śiva, who, under the name of Mihireśvara had been installed by his mother Mihiralakṣmī at a previously established temple of the same god under the name of Kapāleśvara.[2] The record thus gives us two interesting informations : *first*, a Kāpālika sect lived in the Punjab; and *secondly*: it followed the Atharva Veda. These Brāhmaṇas were evidently Kāpālikas (*cf.* Ânandagiri) and they evidently identified their god with Rudra of the Atharva Veda.

While editing the above inscription, Fleet made the interesting remarks : "It is, therefore, a Śaiva inscription; but the occurrence of the word'-mihira', the Sun, as the first component of the god's name, seems to indicate that, in this particular case, some form or other of Solar worship was combined with the Śaiva rites." The conjecture appears to be a plausible one, for in the Punjab region we find from an early time the prevalence

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[1] *ERE*, i. pp. 212ff.

[2] *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. iii, p. 286.

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of the foreign Mithra cult, and this may have influenced the Kāpālikas of the region, and it was evidently under this influence that the conception of the *dvādaśa-jyotirliṅga* developed at a later stage.

The non-Brāhmin Kāpālikas seem to have flourished mainly in South India. In fact, in South India even at the present time there are Śaiva temples where the priests are usually non-Brahmins and where at one time human sacrifices were offered. Śrī-Śaila was one such centre, and Bhavabhūti in his *Mālatīmādhavam* (*c.* 8th century A. D.) speaks of the Kāpālika ascetic Aghoraghaṇṭa who acted as the priest of the goddess Cāmuṇḍā and was also connected with the Śaiva shrine of Śrī-Śaila. Evidently in his article in *ERE*, Frazer refers to these Kāpālikas as the non-Brāhmin priests of the Śaiva temples of South India where human sacrifices were offered in early times.[1]

R. G. Bhandarkar points out that according to Rāmānuja the six marks of the Kāpālika sub-sect were : (a) a necklace (b) an ornament, (c) an ear-ornament, (d) a crest jewel, (e) ashes, and (f) the *yajñopavīta* or the sacred thread.[2] The reference to the sacred thread shows that Rāmānuja is speaking here of the Brāhmaṇa Kāpālikas, as referred to in Nirmand Copper plate inscription noted above. The Kālāmukhas, an extreme sect of the Kāpālikas, hold, on the other hand, the following practices as conducive to the highest goal : (i) eating food in a skull, (ii) besmearing the body with ashes of a dead body; (iii) eating the ashes; (iv) holding a club; (v) keeping a pot of wine; and (vi) worshipping the god as seated therein. The non-mention of the "*yajñopavīta*" in this list shows that the Kālāmukhas did not observe the Vedic practices, though ordinarily "people do not seem to have made sharp distinction between the Kāpālikas and the Kālāmukhas."

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[1] *ERE*, xi. p. 92.

[2] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism* etc., p. 181.

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V. S. Agarwala has drawn our attention to the interesting fact that a miniature relief of Ardhanārīśvara figure belonging to the Kuṣāṇa age has been found at Mathura.[1] It shows unmistakably that the cult of the mother goddess was now gaining in importance and there was an attempt on the part of some Śaiva devotees not only to regard her as the wife of the Lord but to get her completely absorbed into their own deity. The *Purāṇas* relate the story that when Brahmā asked Rudra to divide himself, the latter became divided into male and female forms. Such accounts have little value from the historical point of view. Stobaeus refers to an account of an Indian in Syria in the time of Antoninus of Emesa (218-22 A. D.) and in that connection makes a striking reference to an image of Ardhanārīśvara. In the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, v. pp. 4-5, it has been maintained that the Ardhanārīśvara figure is an attempt of the North Dravidian stock to bring forth the fertility of the earth goddess, for such community generally believed that "the earth after bearing each successive harvest becomes exhausted, and that if she is to continue to discharge her functions, she must be periodically refreshed and roused to new activity," and further that "the fertility of the soil was supposed to depend upon the periodical marriage of mother earth with her male consort." Indeed, such a conception is found among many of the aboriginal tribes of North India, but it is very doubtful whether the origin of the Ardhanārīśvara figure can be traced to such a belief only. Jacobi sees in it the equality of the rank of the mother goddess with her husband. But if we have to understand the true implication of such a conception we have to note the long process of philosophical thoughts in the pages of the Upaniṣads. Thus the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Upaniṣad states that the Ātman, the original Puruṣa, was bisexual and then he divided himself into male and female parts and multiplied. Prajāpati is described in the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* as assuming a bisexual form for the purpose of creation[1]. We may go further back and can possibly trace such a conception in the story of Yama and Yamī in the Ṛg-Veda, which, as pointed out by Dandekar, may be of Indo-European origin. As Prof. Guntert holds "the word Yama can be linguistically connected with two series of words on the one hand, with *Av. Yema*, *Lett. Yumis*, *Mir-emuin*, all meaning twins, and on the other' with *Lat. geminus*, *genellus* and *Gk. didumos*, which mean both twin and hermaphrodite." In course of time, god Śiva absorbed many traits of the Vedic Yama and this combined with the closer connection between the Śaiva and the Śākta sects evidently gave rise to the sub-sect of Ardhanārīśvara.

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[1] *JISOA*, 1937, p. 124, Pl. xliv. 2; for Ardhanārīśvara figure on a seal, *DHI*, pp. [illegible]81f.

In this connection we may also critically study a unique copper coin of Huviṣka having on it the figure of an archer standing right, holding a bow as long as himself, with string inwards; legend right in peculiar characters, which look like old Brāhmī for *Gaṇeśa*.[2] In the Rāmāyaṇa, Śiva has been described as *Gaṇeśalokaśambhuśca* etc. In the Mahābhārata, on the other hand, Gaṇeśa is a name for Śiva while Gaṇeśvara is a designation of Viṣṇu.[3] Thus both Śiva and Viṣṇu claim to be the lord of divine hosts, and herein we find a rapprochement between the two rival sects. The Epic contemplates Viṣṇu in the form of Śiva and Śiva in the form of Viṣṇu. This reconciliation between the Śaivas and the Vaiṣṇavas took place possibly for the first time in the Kuṣāṇa age. Thus we find on a coin of Huviṣka the figure of Śiva having in the hands a *cakra*, along with the *triśūla* and *vajra*. The weapon *cakra* is the emblem of Viṣṇu and the same in the hand of Śiva "shows the beginning of the interesting composite icon of Hari-Hara of subsequent age.[1]" The term Hari-Hara, it may be noted here, appears for the first time in the *Harivaṃśa*.

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[1] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, I. 4; *Katha Upaniṣad*, XIII. 7.

[2] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 125.

[3] *Mbh.*, XIII. 149. 79.

When thus the Śaiva and the Vaiṣṇava sects were coming closer to each other newer conceptions arose to cement this alliance. The Epic describes Rudra as of the nature of fire and Viṣṇu of the moon (Soma), and "these two powers are supposed to compose the world.[2]" We have already referred to the close relationship between Rudra and Soma in the Vedic literature and ultimately how they came to be identified as one. In the later Hari-Hara icons, we find that the Śaiva portion is exactly identical with the description of Śiva given under Ardhanārīśvara in the Iconographic texts showing indirectly that Viṣṇu occupies in these figures the place of Śakti.

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After *c*. 500 A. D. while Vaiṣṇavism had been gradually losing its hold in North India,[3] Śaivism had been coming to the forefront. We have already stated that the Epthalite king Mihirakula was a Śaiva, while some of the later Imperial Gupta monarchs also worshipped the god. After the fall of the Guptas, the Maukharis became supreme in

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[1] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 124.
[2] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 93.
[3] Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, p. 178.

North India, while Bāṇa's description that the Maukharis were revered "like Śiva's foot-print by all the world" evidently shows that they were Śaivas.[1] The Haraha inscription of Īśānavarman opens with two laudatory verses in honour of Śiva and records the construction of a dilapidated temple of the same god.[2] In the Asirgadh Seal, Sarvavarman, the son and successor of Īśānavarman, is described as the worshipper of Maheśvara.[3] The next century was still more a flourishing period for Śaivism. From the epigraphic records it appears that Bhāskaravarman, the king of Kāmarūpa, Śaśāṅka, the king of Bengal, and the great Harṣavardhana were all Śaivas.

Śaṃkara in his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtra* (II.2.37) criticises the Pāśupatas as preaching that Paśupati is the cause of this world (*nimitta-kāraṇam*), which goes against the theory of universal knowledge. Vācaspati Miśra in his *Bhāmatī* states that the Māheśvaras or the followers of Maheśvara were divided into four groups —the *Śaivas*, *Pāśupatas*, *Kāruṇikasiddhāntins* and the *Kāpālikas*. As Vācaspati Miśra composed his work in *c.* 840 A. D. it is not unlikely that these four sub-sects were in existence in the period just following the age of the Guptas, and Śaṃkara evidently describes them summarily under the designation Pāśupatas for they all followed the common theory that God is the *nimitta-kāraṇa* of this world. The Śaivas were evidently the ordinary followers of the god Śiva who followed the *Purāṇa Śaivism* and laid emphasis on *bhakti*; the Pāśupatas have been dealt with already; the Kāruṇika-siddhāntins were, according to Dasgupta, the followers of the Āgama Śaivism;[4] while the Kāpālikas, as already described, were a new offshoot of the Pāśupata sect that evidently arose after *c.* 500 A. D. "They all believe in the Sāṃkhya doctrine of *Prakṛti*, *mahat* etc., and also in some kind of *Yoga* on the syllable *Om*; their final aim was liberation and end of all sorrow. The individual souls are called *paśus* and the word *pāśa* means bondage. The Māheśvaras believe that God is the instrumental cause of the world as the potter is of jugs and earthen vessels.[1]"

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[1] *Harṣa Carita*, tr. Cowell & Thomas, p. 122.

[2] *Ep. Ind*, xv, pp. 120 ff.

[3] *Carpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. ii. p. 221.

[4] Das Gupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. v. p. 50.

From the historical point of view then we may thus divide the Śaiva sects of the post-Gupta age :—

- (i) The ordinary followers of Śiva
- (ii) The Āgamic Śaiva sect
- (iii) The Pāśupatas
  - (a) The Lakulins
  - (b) The Kāpālikas

The ordinary followers of Śiva evidently followed *Purāṇic Śaivism* which laid emphasis on *bhakti*. The *Śiva*, *Kūrma* and the *Liṅga Purāṇas* were composed in this age, and they contain important dissertations on Śaivism and Śaiva theology. The *Kūrma-Purāṇa* contains an account of the Pāśupatas, who, however, should be distinguished from the Śaiva sect of the same name as described in the Mahābhārata, inasmuch as while the latter denies the supremacy of the Vedas, the former acknowledges their authority and recommends their regular study.[2] Here thus we have an account of Smārta Śaivism. It condemns the Pāśupatas who follow the Tāntric method of worship, and recommends the authority of the *Śatarudrīya* and the *Atharvaśiras Upaniṣad*.[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[2] These Śaivas should also be distinguished from the Pāśupatas of the *Pāśupatasūtra*

[3] *Kūrma Purāṇa*, 1. 14.30; 1. 20.69.

In the *Second Canto* of the *Purāṇa* we find mention of a number of places sacred to Śiva, while the *First Canto* contains an account of Vārāṇasī and the different Śiva *liṅgas* in it. If the Chinese traveller Yuan Chwang is to be believed, Vārāṇasī was a strong centre of Śaiva faith in that remote age as at the present time. Thus while giving a description of the place, the Chinese traveller observes : "There were above thirty Buddhist monasteries with more than 3,000 Brethren all adherents of the Sammatiya school. Of Deva temples, there were above 100 and there were more than 10,000 professed adherents of the sects, the majority being devotees of Śiva; some of these cut off their hair; others made it into a topknot; some went about naked and some besmeared themselves with ashes; they were persevering in austerities seeking release from mortal existence. Within the capital there were 20 Deva temples, and the narrative goes on to tell how their storeyed terraces and temple caves were of carved stone and ornamented wood....there was *t'u-shi* (bell-metal) image of the Deva (probably Śiva) nearly 100 feet high which was life-like in its awe-inspiring majesty.[1]"

Watters makes the following comment on the above passage—

"The text of the *Records* used by the compiler of the Fan Chih was apparently, for this passage, different from that of any of our editions. According to it, the object of worship, in the Deva-temple was the *liṅgam*, and it was this which was 100 feet high. It is perhaps possible that Yuan Chwang may have written that among the Deva-temples in the city was one to Śiva which had twenty separate shrines or sacred buildings, and that he then proceeded to describe this great temple.[1]"

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[1] Watters, *On Yuan Chwang*, vol. ii. p. 7.

In the *Liṅga Purāṇa* we find an account of what the "*liṅga*" really is. Thus it is stated : '*liṅga-vedī Mahādevī liṅgaṃ sākṣād Maheśvaraḥ.*[2]':—This conception must have arisen out of the influence of the Sāṃkhya doctrine on the cult, according to which, the Great Puruṣa, represented by the *linga* according to the Śaivites, always acts in conjunction with the Prakṛti, and now the latter is identified with the pedestal of the liṅga. The Purāṇa lays great emphasis on the worship of the *liṅga* and at the same time speaks of the five forms of the god Śiva *Iśāna*, *Aghora*, *Vāmadeva*, *Tatpuruṣa* and *Sadyojāta*.

On the *Liṅga Purāṇa*, Dr. Hazra observes : "All the chapters of the *Liṅga-p*. which are to be dated earlier than 1000 A. D., do not however, seem to have been composed at the same time. An examination of chapters on the method of *Liṅga*-worship shows that they are to be divided into two groups—one, including *Lg*. I. 25-28, in which Vedic elements prevail and the Vedic *mantras* are used frequently and the other showing the influence of the *Tantras*. The chapters of the former group may have been retained from the earlier form of the *Purāṇa*, and those of the latter seem to have dated from the time of the recast, which on account of Tāntric traces, does not seem to have been earlier than 800 A. D.[3]"

Tāntricism, however, appeared in the domain of Indian religions at least as early as the seventh century A. D. as proved by the manuscript of the *Kubjikāmata-tantra* preserved in the Asiatic Society Library, Calcutta. The so-called "latter group" of the *Purāṇas* shows, in fact, that Tāntricism had infiltrated into the field of Śaivism, which ultimately changed the original character of the cult.

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[1] *Ibid*.

[2] *Liṅga Purāṇa*, xvii. 15.

[3] R. C. Hazra, *Purāṇic Records of Hindu Rites and Customs*, pp. 95-96.

The influence of the Tāntric ideals is very prominent on Âgama Śaivism. As Farquhar says: "The *Āgamas* mark the appearance of Śākta Tāntric ideas among Śaivas, and are also the earliest of their codes of temple building, image making, and religious practices.[1]" The *Āgamas* have been divided into two classes, one "meant for the three upper castes (*varṇa*) who had access to the Vedic literature and the other for those that had no access to the Vedic literature.[2]" This fact indirectly throws a good deal of light on the language of the *Āgamas*. The *Śiva-dharmottara* states that the *Āgamas* were written in Sanskrit, Prākṛt and other local dialects, evidently meant for the mass and the educated folk as well. The *Vyāsa-Gītā* section of the *Kūrma Purāṇa* informs us that the *Āgama* Śāivas were Pāśupatas and *Pāṣaṇḍas*.[3] The term *pāṣaṇḍa* evidently refers to the Âgama *Saivas* who followed the non-Vedic *Āgamas*. Elsewhere in the same *Purāṇa* we find the mention of the Vedic Pāśupatas who hate to talk to the *Pāṣaṇḍa*. The *Āgama* literature of the Śaivas finds mention in the *Liṅga Purāṇa* also.[4] The Tamil poets Tirumular (*c.* 800 A. D.), Sundarar (possibly a contemporary of Tirumular) and Manikka Vachkar (*c.* 900 A. D.) all refer to the *Āgamas*. The fact that the manuscripts of the Sanskrit *Āgamas* have been discovered in the libraries at Triplicane, Adyar and Mysore, while there are a large number of manuscripts written in Dravidian possibly points to the fact that South India was the principal seat of the Âgamic Śaivism in the period just preceding *c.* 800 A. D. But we must at the same time note the fact that we have references to the use of the *Āgamas* precisely at this period in Kashmir also. Vasugupta is said to have promulgated the *Śiva-Sūtra* about 850 A. D. to replace the dualistic teaching of the *Āgamas* by *advaita* doctrine. Somānanda who flourished at the end of the ninth century in Kashmir refers to two *Āgamas*, the *Mataṅga* and the *Svayambhūva*, showing that the *Āgamas* were quite popular in the country in the period under consideration.

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[1] Farquhar, *l.c.* p. 194.

[2] Das Gupta, *l.c.* pp. 71-2.

[3] *Kūrma Purāṇa*, ii. 16.15.

[4] *Liṅga Purāṇa*, i. 85.35; II. 55.25.

As none of the Śaiva *Āgamas* before the time of Saṃkarācārya is available in toto, it is very difficult for us to determine what exactly the nature of Āgama Śaivism was in the period under discussion. This much, however, is clear from the *Śārīraka-Bhāṣya* that in the Āgama Śaivism, the god was regarded as instrumental cause of the creation, and not the universal cause, and from its condemnation in the *Purāṇas* it appears that it contained many Tāntric traits as well.[1]

* * * *

The Pāśupatas were the most important Śaiva sect in the post-Gupta period inasmuch as in the *Purāṇas* any Śaiva is called a Pāśupata. The Chinese traveller Yuan Chwang speaks of the following centres of the Pāśupata sect :—

She-lan-ta-lo (Jālandhara) : "There were three Deva-temples with more than 500 professed non-Buddhists of the Pāśupata sect.[2]"

Ngo-hi-ch'i-ta-lo (Ahicchatra) : "Deva temples were nine in number and there were above 300 professed adherents of the other systems Pāśupatas who worshipped Īśvara (Śiva)."[3]

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[1] For a discussion of the Āgama Philosophy, see Das Gupta, *l.c.* pp. 20-24.

[2] Watters, *On Yuan Chwang*, i. p. 296.

[3] *Ibid.*, i, p. 331.

Mo-lo-ku-t'a (Malakūṭa): "In the south of the country near the sea was the *Mo-lo-ya* (Malaya) mountain with lofty cliffs and ridges and deep valleys and gullies, on which were sandal, camphor and other trees. To the east of this was the *Pa-ta-lo-ka* (Paṭalaka) mountain with steep narrow paths over its cliffs and gorges in irregular confusion; on the top was a lake of clear water, whence issued a river which, on its way to the sea, flowed twenty times round mountain. By the side of the lake was a stone Deva-palace frequented by *Kuan-tzu-tsai P'usa*. Devotees, risking life, brave water and mountain to see the *P'usa*, but only a few succeed in reaching the shrine. To the people at the foot of the mountain who pray for a sight of the *P'usa* he appears sometime as a Pāśupata Tīrthika, or as Maheśvara, and consoles the supplicant with this answer.[1]"

Mo-la-po (Mālava) : "Of Deva temples there were some hundreds, and the adherents of the various sects were very numerous, the majority being Pāśupatas.[2]"

Mo-hi-ssu-fa-lo-pu-la (Maheśvarapura, corresponding to the old town of Maṇḍala "the original capital of the country on the upper Narbada") : "There were a few score Deva-temples, and the majority belonged to the Pāśupatas.[3]"

Lang-kie(ka)-lo (Lankar) : "There were also some hundreds of Deva-temples, and very many professed Pāśupatas.[4]"

Fa-la-na (Varaṇa or Bannu in the Kurram river district) : "There were also five Deva-Temples chiefly belonging to the Pāśupatas.[5]"

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[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. ii, p. 229.

[2] *Ibid.*, ii, p. 242.

[3] *Ibid.*, ii, p. 242.

[4] *Ibid.*, ii, p. 251.

[5] *Ibid.*, ii, p. 262.

Ku-sa-tan-na(Khotan) : "Then the Chinese prince decided to settle in the district between the territory which he occupied and that in which the Takṣaśilā people had settled. Wishing to select a site for his capital he called for one expert in Land-science whereupon a Pāśupata Tirthika appeared bearing a calabash full of water.[1]"

* * * *

From the above account the following facts emerge :—

(i) that western and north-western India was the principal home of the Pāśupata sect;
(ii) that the religion had spread beyond the frontiers of India in Khotan;
(iii) that in Peninsular India the only place where Pāśupatism was strong was the Pāṇḍya or the Malakūṭa country.

It is not unlikely that by the term Pāśupata the Chinese traveller also meant the various sub-sect of the main body like the Lakulins and the Kāpālikas. Numerous sculptures of Lakuli dating from the seventh century A. D. have been found in Rajasthan, while from Cintra inscription it appears that the Lāṭa country was the main centre of the cult.[2] From verses 23 to 33 of the record, it appears that the other centres of the cult were Kedāra, Prayāga or the confluence of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā, Śrīparvata, Rāmeśvara, Prabhāsa etc. Evidently, the Chinese traveller Yuan Chwang was not aware of many of these centres of Pāśupatism, as his description shows.

We have already seen that Lakuli is regarded in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* as the twenty-eighth incarnation of Śiva,[3] and a sub-sect started with him in the first part of the first century A. D. One of the peculiarities of the sect was that it was under the guidance of a supreme *guru* just as we find *mahāntas* in charge of the different sectarion organizations of the present day. Rājaśekharasūri and Haribhadra give us the following list of teachers who succeed Lakuli one after another, and this list has also been noted by the editor of the *Pāśupata-Sūtra*. The list is as follows :—

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[1] *Ibid.*, ii, p. 296.
[2] *Ep. Ind.*, I.
[3] *Supra*, pp. 125ff.

> Śrī Lakulīśa, Kuśika, Gārgya, Kauruṣa, Maitreya, Iśāṇa, Paragārgya, Kapilānda, Manuṣyaka, Kuśika, Atri, Piṅgala, Puṣpaka, Bṛhadārya, Agasti, Rāśikara, and Vidyāguru.[1]

We also learn of three more *ācāryas*, Kārttikarāśi, Vālmīkirāśi and Tripurāntaka. This shows that the system had been continuing all through the ancient period.

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[1] *Ṣaddarśanasamuccya*, Appendix III.

SECTION D

The Śāktas

The Śāktas worshipping the Mother Goddess are predominant in Eastern India, mostly in West Bengal and Assam though their sanctuaries are to be found throughout the country. The chief of these sanctuaries are known as *pīṭhas* supposed to contain parts of the body of the Great Mother when in one of her births. She as Satī died of shock due to insult hurled on her husband Śiva by Her father. Out of pang for separation, Śiva began carrying Her corpse on his shoulder. Viṣṇu came in and cut the body to pieces with his discus from behind. These pieces fell on earth and became the present *pīṭhas*. This story has possibly at its background the influence of the Buddhist legend of the erection of the *stūpas* on parts of the Buddha's body in different places.

In eastern India, the Śāktas generally follow the practice of left-hand Tāntricism that enjoins the system of worship by means of five *m*s, known as *pañca makāra*. This particular form of *sādhanā* has been much misunderstood and much criticised by Indian and Western Scholars. The system really enjoins upon extreme renunciation. A worshipper would take his food, usually rice, fried or boiled with fish and meat, then take wine so that his nerve-centres may be stimulated and then with a lady by his side, or on his lap, begin his worship and be completely engrossed in meditation. An extremely difficult practice, this is real renunciation according to the *Tantras*; *real* in the sense that the worshipper has all the objects of enjoyment before him but his mind is not disturbed, an extremely difficult practice brought into India by the sage Vaśiṣṭha from Mahācīna or Tibet, so goes the legend. It appeared late in the Indian system, not within the period with which we are dealing here.

The worship of Śakti or the female energy has been prevalent in India from a very early period among almost all the different ethnological elements comprising the vast mass of Indian population. Later literary references show that such a mother goddess was worshipped by the Proto-Austroloids, the Dravidians and also by the Aryans and in course of time all these different deities combined into one great Mother Goddess (*Ādyā-Śakti*) to be identified with *Prakṛti* of the Sāṃkhya thought. Thus in the Śākta cult of the present time we find the stamp of different ethnological groups, and the history of the process of this evolution is no doubt interesting.

In the Ṛg-Veda, we have no definite reference to any mother cult. In I. 113. 19, Uṣas, *Dawn*, is described as '*devānāṃ mātā*', while in another place she is described again as the daughter of heaven. Dakṣa and Aditi are regarded sometimes as universal parents, while elsewhere Dakṣa is said to have sprung from Aditi and Aditi from Dakṣa. These stray and conflicting references clearly demonstrate the fact that a mother-cult had not yet been established in the Ṛg-Vedic age.

Among the Harappans, however, who lived contemporaneously with the Vedic Aryans for some time at least before they were merged into the vast mass of the conquerors, the worship of the female principle appears to have been in vogue as proved by the pottery images of the goddess and the 'ring stones.' These may lead us to infer that there was a Śākta sect among the Harappans. We must, however, be cautious in dealing with the objects, for as Wheeler says : "A large number of the terra-cottas represent females, and there has been perhaps an exaggerated tendency to regard these as a manifestation of the Great Mother Goddess familiar in the regions of Western Asia and parts of Europe.[1]" There has been indeed some controversy whether the 'ring stones' really represent the female *yoni*. Two seals, however, make very interesting study. In the first of them, we find a nude female figure, turned upside down, with outspread legs and a plant issuing from the womb. It undoubtedly represents the Mother Goddess, *bhū* or *pṛthivī*, with which Aditi is sometimes equated in the Ṛg-Veda. On the reverse side of the same seal, there is the picture of a man with a sickle-shaped knife in hand, and a woman seated on the ground with hands raised in supplication. It has been interpreted as showing human sacrifice before the Mother Goddess. The picture on the other seal is more interesting. A female figure stands on the bifurcated branch of a pipal tree, while a worshipper brings a goat, evidently for sacrifice, and a number of people standing in the lower register appear to be taking part in the sacrifice. Here the female figure undoubtedly represents the Mother Goddess and the whole scene reminds us of the present day Śakti worship.

From the above evidences it is quite clear that the worship of the female principle was prevalent in the Indus valley country even in the pre-historic days. It was in the later Vedic age that we find the presence of the Mother Goddess in the Aryan pantheon. Thus the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā* while speaking of Rudra states : "This is thy portion, Rudra, graciously accept it together with thy sister Ambikā.[1]" Unmarried girls used to worship Rudra and Ambikā to get suitable husbands. Thus Rudra and Ambikā together symbolised some sort of fertility cult, and still when they are described as brother and sister, we may perhaps agree with the view that this "probably throws a light on the brother and sister form of marriage which was originally so prevalent among the Vrātyas,[2]" who lived outside the pale of Aryandom, though they not necessarily had been Dravidians. In the *Śatarudrīya* litany of the same Saṃhitā, as we have already seen, Rudra has been associated with un-Aryan people, and thus it is not unlikely that the Mother Goddess of the Harappans came to be associated with the God. For the first time in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, which has been assigned by scholars to third century B. C., we find that Ambikā is described as the wife of Rudra. In the same work, Rudra is further described as Umāpati, and the goddess is given names like Durgā, Kātyāyanī, Karālī, Bhadrakālī, Varadā, Kanyākumārī, Sarvavarṇā, Chandasāṃ mātā, Sarasvatī and Vedamātā. These names are interesting and many of them show that they were nomenclatures of distinct divinities that evidently coalesced with the Great Mother. As Weber has stated : "I consider the present opportunity a favourable one for speaking of some other names of Śiva's spouse. As in Śiva, first of all two gods, Agni and Rudra, are combined, so too his wife is to be regarded as a compound of several divine forms, and this becomes quite evident if we look over the mass of her epithets. While one set of these, as Umā, Ambikā, Pārvatī, Haimavatī, belong to the wife of Rudra, others as Kāli, Karālī, carry us back to the wife of Agni, while Gaurī and others perhaps refer to Nirṛiti, the goddess of all evil.[1]"

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[1] Wheeler, *Indus Valley Civilization*, p. 68.

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[1] Muir, *OST.*, iv. pp. 267-8.
[2] Karmarkar, *The Religions of India*, i., p. 98.

Thus we find that while Śiva is practically a combination of two gods—Rudra and Agni—his Śakti is also a combination of the spouses of both the deities. We should note here further that some of the names of the goddess referred to above refer to different local divinities. Thus Umā who is given the epithet Haimavatī in the *Kena Upaniṣad* appears as a heavenly woman conversant with Brahman.[2] She was evidently a goddess of the Himalayan region and later on came to be identified with the wife of Śiva. This appears to be the case when we find that the term Umā cannot be derived from any Sanskrit root. The theory of some modern scholars that it comes from the Dravidian word *amma* can hardly be accepted for there is no evidence of the prevalence of Dravidian tongue in the Himalayan region. Similarly untenable is Sāyaṇa's attempt to connect it with the term Soma (*sa Umā* or *Umayā sahita*). It may be mentioned here that Kālidāsa who lived long before the commentator gives an altogether different derivation of the term.[3]

Similarly Kanyā-Kumārī originally signified a goddess of South India. We may note here in this connection the following account from the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (*c.* 60-80 A. D.) :—"Beyond this (Balita=modern Varkkallai, 8.42'N, 76-43'E) there is another place called Comari, at which are the Cape of Camari and a harbour; hither come those men who wish to consecrate themselves for the rest of their lives, and bathe and dwell in celibacy and women also do the same; for it is told that a goddess once dwelt here and bathed.[4]" In this account of the *Periplus* we have evidently a reference to the cult of a goddess in the Pāṇḍya country and it is clear that Megasthenes refers to her as the daughter of Heracles. In the Great Epic also we find that "as Gaurī, she (Durgā) is the sister of Vāsudeva and in this form she inhabits the southern mountains.[1]" Megasthenes is thus evidently wrong when he makes her a daughter of Heracles. In the *Taittirīya Araṇyaka*, we find for the first time the identification of this virgin goddess of the south with the Śakti of Śiva.

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[1] Muir, *OST.*, iv, p. 361.

[2] *Kena Upaniṣad*, iii. 11. 12 & iv. 1.2.

[3] *Kumārasambhavam*, i. 26.

[4] *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* ed. Schoff, p. 46.

In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, Kālī and Karālī are the two among the names of the seven tongues of Agni. As Jacobi says, the seven tongues of Agni may be assumed, with some probability, to have been originally female demons representing fire as the destructive and voracious elements, since they are also names of Durgā as the object of a bloody sacrificial worship.[2] The term Durgā as the name of a goddess is met with in the literature of the pre-Christian days. (cf. *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* : *tanno Durgī pracodayāt*) and, as already pointed out, Weber may be right in assuming that she is to be connected with Nirṛti, the Vedic goddess of all evil, by which assumption the terrific character of Durgā would be accounted for.

In the Mahābhārata we get a hint how these different female divinities came to be associated with the wife of Śiva. Thus it is stated of Bhadrakālī : "This lady, who is called Bhadrakālī, has originated from the anger of the goddess.[3]" Again, we read : "Urged by her anger, the wife of Maheśvara herself assumed a dreadful form known by the name of Mahākālī, proceeded in the company of that being who had come out from Mahādeva's mouth, for beholding with her own eyes the act of destruction which was her own.[1]" These examples show that the Brāhmaṇical thinkers gradually came to conceive of one Great Mother Goddess and the different mother-cults of India came to be regarded either as parts of or as identical with that great one. As we shall see later on, even the mother goddess of the Proto-Austroloids became merged into the Great Śakti cult in the early centuries of the Christian era.

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[1] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 224.

[2] A somewhat similar view is also maintained by Weber, cf. Muir, *OST*, iv. p. 365.

[3] *Mbh*, xii, 284. 51.

It may be noted here that though there are no coins or epigraphs of the pre-Christian age referring directly or indirectly to any Śākta-Mother-worshipping sect, we have some interesting stone discs and terra-cotta objects depicting the figure of the goddess from different parts of North India. This possibly shows that the cult had its votaries chiefly among the mass, though it is not unlikely that among the upper strata of the society she had a few followers. While discussing the coins of the Pañcāla king Bhadraghoṣa (*c.* 1st century B. C.), Allan observes :—"On the reverse of Bhadraghoṣa's coins is a female deity standing on a lotus, whom we may identify as Bhadrā in allusion to the name of Bhadraghoṣa.... The type suggests Lakṣmī.[2]" In the Purāṇas, Bhadrā, however, is the name of the goddess Durgā. As the goddess stands on a lotus it is better to think of her as Lakṣmī, in which case the allusion to Bhadrā in Bhadraghoṣa's name cannot be traced.

Several curious stone discs discovered at Taxila, Kosam, Rajghat near Benares, and Murtazigunj Mahalla of the Patna City throw interesting side light on the prevalence of the Mother-cult in the pre-Christian age.[1] Most of these have got a hole in the centre and around the same there are female figures, generally nude, with some animals. Some contain, moreover, the picture of creeper like objects and an animal which appears like a lizard or aligator or *godhā*. Such discs hail from other parts of Eastern India as well. It is believed that the female figures represent the Mother goddess or the goddess of Fertility and we should note here further that there may be some truth in the theory for, in Bengali traditions, as recorded in mediaeval *Maṅgala Kāvyas*, the Mother Goddess Caṇḍī is similarly associated with a *godhā*. These discs are found in the western parts of India also. We have already seen that Śaivism was very strong in Western India and this possibly contributed to a great extent to the close relationship between the Śaiva and the Śākta cults.

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[1] *Ibid.*, xii. 284. 31f.

[2] Allan, *l.c.* p. cxvii.

Marshall discovered in Taxila several terra-cotta figurines that may have some connection with the Mother cult. They have been classified as follows :

(a) 'Nude Mother' or 'Earth Goddess' type; one of them belongs to the fourth century B. C. and three to the Maurya age.

(b) Female deity standing with full-flowing skirt,—four belonging to the Maurya age.

(c) Female deity standing with bird in the left hand and wearing tight skirt,—three belonging to the Maurya age.

(d) Draped female deity, seated, with bird in folded arms. Of three such specimens two belong to the Maurya age.

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[1] Some scholars have traced the influence of Tāntricism on these discs. But it is difficult to agree with this view inasmuch as on the basis of the available evidences it appears that Tāntricism first appeared in the field of religion in the Gupta age. (Vide : *Supra*, pp. 18 ff.) These *discs* may be regarded as the fore-runners of later Tāntricism.

(e) Draped female deity standing with child on left hip—two belonging to the Maurya age.

(f) Male and female figures standing side by side—one belongs to the fourth century B. C. and two to the Maurya period.

Many of the figures mentioned above are represented in discs found at Kosam, Rajghat and Patna. But specimens described in (e) and (f) are not represented pictorially in the finds from Eastern India. There is again a somewhat peculiar representation in (b) above, which has been described by Marshall as follows :—

> "Ex-voto plaque with standing figure of female deity in relief.... Pinkish red terra-cotta. Figure wears wide trousers and veil hanging from the top of the head down the back and to each side....Both arms at full length and symmetrical.[1]"

The above description naturally gives us the idea that the deity so represented must have been of foreign origin. In this background, if we study the coins of the Kuṣāṇa King Huviṣka, to which we shall refer later on, we may possibly conclude that the Sumero-Babylonian goddess Ishtar-Nana was gradually making her way into India. In this connection further, we may also scrutinise the terra-cotta objects representing male and female figures standing side by side in (f) above. One of them belonging to the second century B. C. has thus been described by Marshall :

> "Votive plaque of red terra-cotta, representing a male and a female figure standing side by side and

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[1] Marshall, *Taxila*, ii, p. 443.

holding hands. No wash or slip. The male wears turban, dhoti, shawl, necklace and ear-rings, and is holding the side of the shawl with his right hand. The female wears a head-dress with a topknot and a long veil falling down on either side of the head; also large ear-pendants and neck-lace; her left hand rests on her hip. This plaque is cast from the terra-cotta matrix Bm. 1, 551, which was found in the same spot along with a number of similar plaques.[1]"

In the above seal, we have possibly the earliest archaeological evidence of a god and his Sakti together, and this *motif* can also be traced on the coins of Huviṣka. From the archaeological evidences we can further draw the conclusion that during the Maurya age the mother cult was undoubtedly important. The archaeological finds hailing from Eastern India, on the other hand, contain nothing to show that the deity has yet been united with a father god. J. N. Banerjea thinks that the circular discs with various figures within a circle as found in Patna, Kosam and other places may be regarded as the forerunner of the *yantras* of the later Tāntric cult.[2] Thus in the Maurya period we can discern at least three distinct types of Śākta sects in India : (a) one living in the north western part of the country conceiving of the Mother-Goddess as united with a Father-God who may be identified with Rudra-Siva (b) another in the eastern part that laid emphasis on the *yantras* or magic diagrams; (c) a third in the Far South where the goddess was conceived of as a Virgin (cf. *Pandaea* of Megasthenes).

Some scholars think that a vegetable deity came to be merged in the cult. Thus in the Great Epic, Durgā has been described as *Śākambharī*.[1] A similar idea may also have been prevalent in the pre-Christian days. We have already referred to the Harappan seals representing nude female figure upside down with legs wide apart and a plant coming out of her womb. It is evidently a representation of the Earth goddess producing the vegetables. On some of the stone discs discovered in the Murtazigunj Mahalla of the Patna city, we find a nude female figure with plant and vegetable designs around the goddess. Here also the *Śākambharī* aspect of the Mother Goddess is emphasised. That such an idea was really prevalent in the eastern part of India is proved by the evidence of the Rāmāyaṇa, where Sītā is represented as rising "in the field where the plough-share breaks it, rending the earth." As Hopkins says : "Sītā herself is a Corn-mother. She is represented by the plough share. To this category belongs also the youngest wife of the great fiend, whose son is Atikāya, the giant. She herself is called Dhānyamālinī, 'Corn-Crowned' and appears in R. 5,22,39f, as endeavouring to divert her lord from his attention to the furrow (Sītā).[2]" This aspect took a new turn in the later period and is represented by the *Navapatrikā* ceremony during the time of the worship of the Great Goddess Durgā in Bengal.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 449.
[2] Banerjea, *DHI*, 171.

Coming on the threshold of the Christian age, we note a coin of Huviṣka having on it the figure of a male and a female with a monogram between them which has been interpreted as referring to the male as *Oesa* or *Bhaveśa* and the second as *Nana*, who is identical with the Sumero-Babylonian goddess Ishtar. As again on some of the issues of the same king we a have female figure with the inscription *Omma* or Umā, and as in the later period we find that Durgā absorbed many of the traits of the goddess Ishtar-Nana (*cf.* lion seat etc.), it has been assumed that in the early centuries of the Christian era, the Babylonian goddess became merged in the Mother-goddess of India.[1]

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[1] *Mbh*, vi. 23.9.

[2] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 12.

The account of the goddess Durgā and Kālī occurring in the Mahābhārata, which Payne thinks may be dated in the third or fourth century A. D.,[2] throws interesting light on the Śākta sects of the age. There are two *Durgāstotras*, one by Arjuna in the *Bhīṣmaparvan* and the other by *Yudhiṣṭhira* in the *Virāṭaparvan* that bring out many traits of the great goddess to be found in later Tāntric texts. Thus she is described as "having her perpetual abode on the Vindhya, and delighting in spirituous liqour, flesh and sacrificial victims." (*Vindhye caiva naga-śreṣṭhe tava sthānaṃ hi śāśvataṃ, Kāli Kāli Mahā-kāli sidhu-māṃsa-paśu-priye*).[3] The association of the goddess with the Vindhya region is interesting, for the range was the home of various Proto-Austroloid tribes, while elsewhere the goddess is expressedly associated with the Śabaras and the Pulindas who lived on the same range. The description clearly shows that a Mother-goddess of the Proto-Austroloid tribes was now being merged with the great Aryan Mother-goddess, and the Śāktas were imbibing un-Aryan habits.

In the *Durgāstotra* by Arjuna, we meet with some other interesting facts. The Devī is described as:—"..*aṭṭa śūla-praharaṇe khaḍga-kheṭaka-dhāriṇi, gopendra-sānuje jyeṣṭhe Nandagopa-Kulodbhave. Mahiṣāsṛk priye nityam Kauśiki pītavāsini, aṭṭahāsa Kokāmukhe namaste'stu raṇa-*

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[1] For Ishtar, see *ERE*,. vii. pp. 428ff.

[2] Payne, *The Śāktas*, p. 39.

[3] Muir, *OST*, iv. p. 369.

priye"; i. e....armed with many spears, wielding sword shield, younger sister of the chief of cowherds, eldest born in the family of the cowherd Nanda, delighting always in buffalo's (Mahiṣa's) blood, Kaūśikī, wearing yellow garments, loud-laughing, O Kokāmukhā, reverence to thee, thou delighter in battle.[1]"

In the above account while the warlike attitude of the goddess has been emphasised on the one hand (*cf.* Nana-Ishtar), an attempt has been made on the other to bring her in special relationship with the Vaiṣṇava cult, inasmuch as she is described as born in the family of Nanda, the foster-father of Vāsudeva whose sister she is supposed to be. She is further described as Kokāmukhā, or wife of Kokāmukha, another name of god Viṣṇu.[2] This shows that the Śākta sect became important in the early centuries of the Christian era, and though the Saivas won it to their side by making its goddess the wife of their own lord, the Vaiṣṇavas also made a similar attempt, but could not succeed like their rivals evidently because Śiva absorbed more popular elements than Viṣṇu, and hence the popular female deity naturally came to be associated with him. This combined Śiva-Śakti cult is evidenced by the coins of Huviṣka referred to above, though the conception may be as early as the time of the Mauryas (*cf.* Taxila finds referred to above).

In the Epic stotra, we further meet with the following interesting lines :—

"*Jambu-kaṭaka-caityeṣu nityaṃ sannihitālaye*
Tvaṃ vidyā Brahmavidyānāṃ mahānidrā ca dehinām."

"...who dwellest continually near the *caityas* and the mountain ridges. Of sciences thou art the science of

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 367-8.
[2] *B. C. Law Volume*, i. pp. 88ff.

Brahma (or of the Veda), and the great sleep of embodied beings.[1]"

The association of the great goddess with the Buddhist *Caityas* in the above passage undoubtedly shows that the Śākta sect was gradually absorbing elements from the religion of Śākyamuni. If the account can really be attributed to the Kuṣāṇa age, as we believe, then it may be inferred that the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism was spreading its influence over the sect and this ultimately resulted in the fusion of the Buddhist and the Brāhmaṇical Tāntric cults and in the identification of the Buddhist goddess Tārā with the Śakti of the Śāktas.

In the *Harivaṃśa* we find further attempt by the Vaiṣṇavas to affiliate the Śākta cult with their own. Thus it is stated that "with the view of defeating the designs of Kaṃsa in regard to the destruction of Devakī's off-springs, Viṣṇu descended into Pātāla where he sought the aid of *Nidrā-Kāla-rūpinī* (sleep in the form of time) and promised her in return that through his favour she should be a goddess adored in all the world. He desires her to be born as the ninth child of Yaśodā on the same night on which he was to be born as the eighth child of Devakī. He tells her that she would be taken by the foot and cast upon a rock; but would then obtain an eternal place in the sky, becoming assimilated to him in glory; would be installed by Indra among the gods, received by him as his sister, under the name of Kauśikī, and obtain from him (Indra) a perpetual abode on the Vindhya mountain, where thinking upon him (Viṣṇu), she would kill the two demons Sumbha and Niśumbha, and would be worshipped with animal sacrifice.[2]"

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[1] Muir, *OST*, iv. p. 368.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 369.

In the above account, we find a deliberate attempt made by the Vaiṣṇavas to subordinate the Śākta cult to their own. She is further described as Nārāyaṇī, wife of Nārāyaṇa, and as being worshipped by the savage tribes like the Pulindas, Barbaras and Śabaras.

We may thus draw the following inferences regarding the condition of the Śākta sect in the early centuries of the Christian era :—

(1) The Śāktas were growing in importance and they made an alliance with the Śaivas.

(2) Savage tribes like the Pulindas, Barbaras and Śabaras who lived on the western part of the Vindhyan range were being admitted into the fold.

(3) The goddess was worshipped by offerings of flesh and wine and it is quite evident that the worshippers also partook of them. This practice is found also in later Tāntricism.

(4) The Śāktas were no doubt very liberal and they tolerated rival sects like the Vaiṣṇavas.

(5) The sect absorbed not only Buddhistic influences but also foreign mother goddess like Ishtar.

In the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, which has been assigned to *c.* 60 A. D. by Schoff, we find a reference to a virgin goddess of the extreme south of India. It evidently refers to a Śākta sect among the ancient Tamils. We have already discussed this account and here may only note the fact that this Dravidian Śākta sect was being gradually merged into the bigger sect worshipping the mother goddess.

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The Gangdhar Stone inscription of the year 480 V. E.= 423-4 A. D. shows how the Śākta cult was gradually tending towards Tāntricism in the age of the Guptas. The epigraph records that "a certain Mayurakshaka, a minister of Viśvavarman, built a temple of Viṣṇu,—also a temple of the divine mothers—and also a large drinking well.[1]" Ll. 35-6 of the record has been translated by Fleet as follows :

> "Also, for the sake of religious merit, the councillor of the king caused to be built this very terrible abode....(and) filled full of female ghouls of the divine Mothers, who utter loud and tremendous shouts in joy, (and) who stir up the very oceans with the mighty winds rising from the magic rites of their religions.[2]"

If we analyse the above account we find that (a) there were divine Mothers more than one; (b) that these divine Mothers were accompanied by female ghouls or *dākinīs*. and (c) that this mother worship was associated with magic rites.

The divine Mothers are again referred to in the Bihar Stone Pillar inscription of Skanda Gupta.[3] There are some oft-quoted passages that state the Mothers to be seven in number. They are as follows : "*Brāhmī-Maheśvarī-caiva Kaumārī Vaiṣṇavī tathā, Māhendrī caiva Vārāhī Cāmuṇḍā sapta-mātaraḥ.*" In this *verse* we find the combination of several female energies, some Aryan and some probably Dravidian. The Brāhmī, Māheśvari and Vaiṣṇavī are the different aspects of the *Gāyatrī*, the Vedic *mantra par excellence*, while Māhendri signifies the female partner of the celestial king Indra. Kaumārī, as already pointed out, is no doubt the Virgin goddess of South India while from the *Mālatīmādhavaṃ* of Bhavabhūti it appears that the stronghold of the Cāmuṇḍā worship was at Srī Saila in the Madras Presidency. Afterwards the number of the divine Mothers was raised to eight, nine, sixteen etc. The kernel of the whole account is to be found in the *Caṇḍī-māhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, which states that the Goddess was created by the combined energies of all the gods together, showing indirectly that all the spouses of the different gods were ultimately united into one. We find almost a similar picture in the hundred names of the goddess enumerated in the *Muṇḍamālā Tantra*, evidently a late work.

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[1] *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. iii. p. 47.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

The association of the goddess with *ḍākinī* and *śākinī* is indeed very interesting showing how Central Asiatic influences were gradually creeping into the cult. As pointed out by P. C. Bagchi, the *śākinī* refers to the Śakas and the *ḍākinī* to the Dags of Dagistan in Central Asia.[1] For further traces of foreign influence we may turn to the *Nīla Tantra* which states that the Devī was born in a lake called *Col* lying to the west of the Mount Meru. Meru has been identified with the Pamir[2] and to the west of it lie the Syr Daria and Amu Daria valleys where even at the present time the lakes are called *Col* by the local people.[3] Thus it is quite clear that we can trace a good deal of Central Asiatic influences on our Śākta cult. It was in the closing days of the Guptas, possibly in the sixth century, that the *Devī* or the *Caṇḍī-Māhātmya* or '*Saptaśatī*' which forms a part of the famous *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, was composed. It describes some of the achievements of the goddess, and refers to her daily and autumnal worship. As Payne says : "In it there are many traces of magical beliefs, and descriptions of the terrifying appearance of the goddess, but appeals are also made to her tender aspects, and a deep faith in her power is evidenced. It must have originated in some place dedicated to the goddess in one of her terrible forms, but not in Bengal. Pargiter, the editor of the standard critical English edition of the text, connects it with Māndhātā in Western India. It tells in graphic language of the vanquishing of the gods by Mahisha and his demons. Out of the special energies of all the deities a goddess is formed, *Chāṇḍikā* or *Ambikā*, and after a great battle she destroys the demon-buffalo and his followers. Later the gods are again overcome, this time by the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha. The former sought to marry the goddess, and when she declined an army was sent against her under Chaṇḍa and Muṇḍa. It was destroyed by the goddess Kālī, who in turn received from Chaṇḍikā the name Chāmuṇḍā. Chaṇḍikā herself at length conquered Niśumbha and Śumbha, whereat the universe was filled with joy. In this fierce framework there are passages breathing deep religious feeling and enthusiastic adoration[1]."

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[1] P. C. Bagchi, *Tantras*, p. 51.

[2] Seal, *Vaiṣṇavism and Christianity*, p. 48f.

[3] P. C. Bagchi, *Tantras*, p. 46.

The reference to magic practices in the Gangdhar record shows that the Tāntric rites had already appeared in the field of Brāhmaṇical religion. It became more prominent in the time of Harṣa. Thus in *Ch. V.* of his work, Bāṇa speaks of the illness of Prabhākaravardhana, and then describes how different sets of people had been attempting to make the king cured by different forms of worship. The description runs thus :

"Here loving kinsmen were keeping a fast to appease Ahibradhna (Ahirbudhna, a name of Śiva), lying before his image. There young nobles were burning themselves with lamps to propitiate the Mothers. In one place a Dravidian was ready to solicit the Vampire with the offering of a skull. In another an Andhra man was holding up his arms like a rampart to conciliate Caṇḍī. Elsewhere distressed young servants were pacifying Mahākāla by holding melting gums on their heads. In another place, a group of relatives was intent on an oblation of their own flesh, which they severed with keen knives. Elsewhere again young courtiers were openly resorting to the sale of human flesh.[1]"

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[1] Payne, *The Śāktas*, p. 40.

In the above account, we find mainly the worship of the god Śiva and the Mother-goddess accompanied with mystic rites as prescribed in some of the later *Tantras*. This shows that the Tāntric rites were gradually encroaching upon the religious sects of India following the Brāhmaṇical faith. From Bāṇa's *Caṇḍīśatakaṃ*, composed on the background of the *Caṇḍīmāhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, it is clear that Bāṇa was a devotee of the goddess worshipped after Tāntric fashion.

In the *Si-yu-ki*, we find various references to the Śākta cult and the centres of Śakti worship in the 7th century A. D. Thus while speaking of Palusha, identified by Cunningham with Palo-dheri, in W. Pakistan, the work states that "above 50 li to the north east of Palusha, was a great mountain which had a likeness (or image) of Maheśvara's spouse Bhīmā-devī of dark blue-stone. According to local accounts this was a natural image of the goddess; it exhibited prodigies and was a great resort of devotees from all parts of India; to true believers, who after fasting seven days prayed to her, the goddess sometimes shewed herself and answered prayers. At the foot of the mountain was a temple of Maheśvara-deva in which the ash-smearing 'Tīrthikas' performed much worship.[2]"

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[1] *Harṣacarita*, tr., Cowell & Thomas, pp. 135-6.
[2] Watters, *On Yuan Chwang*, i, p. 221.

The above account is perhaps the earliest definite historical evidence showing the association of the ash-smearing "Tīrthikas"=the Pāśupatas with the mother cult. From the *Life* we learn further that another centre of the Devī worship was in the eastern U. P. region. Thus we are informed that "the pilgrim left Ayodhya in a boat along with a party and proceeded east down the Ganges towards Ayamukha ('Daundia-Khera on the northern bank of the Ganges'). When about 100 li on the way, in a wood of aśoka tree, the boat was attacked by *thugs* who robbed the party. When these *thugs* saw that the Chinese pilgrim was an uncommonly fine looking man they decided to sacrifice him to their cruel deity Durgā. From this terrible fate the pilgrim was rescued by a providential hurricane which put the wicked *thugs* in fear, and made them release their doomed victim, treat him with awe and reverence, and under his teaching give up their wicked profession, and take the vows of lay Buddhists.[1]"

Another centre of Śakti worship appears to have been in Western India, where according to some scholars the *Saptaśatī* was composed, as evidenced by the *Kādambarī* of Bāṇa. Thus Candrāpīḍa, on his way to Ujjayinī, found in the forest a red flag near a shrine of the goddess Durgā, and the shrine was guarded by an old Dravidian hermit. The Dravidian (?) hermit may really have been a Śabara, who according to the *Geography* of Ptolemy, lived in this region and who are associated in the *Harivaṃśa* with the worship of the goddess.

Saṃkarācārya tried to reform the Śāktas of their horrible Tāntric practices. Thus we are informed that at Kāñchi he changed the priest of the temple who evidently followed left-hand Tāntric practices and appointed a Smārta Brāhmaṇa in his place. The temple at Kāñchi was not a place for Śakti worship, but this shows, at any rate, his dislike for Tāntricism. He himself composed several *stotras* addressed to the Devī and from his *bhāṣya* on the Gītā it appears that he followed the Śākta yoga. It is quite apparent that all the Devī *stotras* that go by his name may not have been composed by him, but there is no doubt that some came out undoubtedly from his pen. Thus while he preached the higher philosophy of the supreme divine knowledge on one hand, he favoured the ordinary mass worship of the gods and goddesses on the other. But to him, the Devī appears to have been one of the *pañcāṅga devatās* of the Smārtas, and not the supreme divinity of the Śāktas.

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[1] *Ibid.*, i., p. 360.

SECTION E

The Sauras

At present the Sauras represent a very small sect members of which live in Madhya Pradesh region and Madras. The Drāviḍa Brāhmaṇas forming this sub-sect are not only very orthodox and follow many of the Vedic injunctions but also bear, in most cases, a *tilaka* on the forehead as a special sectarian mark. It is of red sandalwood. The Sauras of Madhya Pradesh follow the practice of not taking their meal until they have a view of the sun in the sky, while on every Sunday as also on the day when the sun enters into a fresh sign of the zodiac, according to the *nirayaṇa* system, they eat one meal without salt. It is to be noted in this connection that the Smārtas offer *pūjā* to the sun-god along with other planets with the *mantra*, *Ādityādinavagrahebhyoḥ namaḥ* before they begin their oblations proper. This possibly shows that the sun plays some role still in the Hindu pantheon.

In the Vedic texts, the Sun, Sūrya, is looked upon as one of the greatest deities delivering man from trouble and dishonour, guilt and disease, and in the Ṛg-Veda there are at least ten hymns invoking the god. His worship was widespread and the Vedic *Gāyatrī* is nothing but his invocation. The poet describes him as seated on a chariot drawn by steeds varying in number from one to seven.[1] In some places of the Saṃhitā, he is called the child of the Dawn while at others as Dawn's husband or as following Dawn like a lover 'as young men follow a maiden.[2]"

The earliest reference to the Saura sect, however, is to be found in the account of the Classical writers who refer to the Indians as worshipping Soroadeios or the Sūryadeva. With the rise of Vaiṣṇavism, the sun-god gradually began to lose much of his importance, as Viṣṇu, originally a solar deity, absorbed in himself much of the elements that had been attributed to Sūrya in the earlier days. From the accounts of the historians of Alexander's invasion, we can possibly discern how the cult of the Sun was flourishing side by side with that of Viṣṇu. Thus Curtius states that an image of Heracles-Viṣṇu was carried in front of the army of Porus as he advanced against Alexander.[3] On the other hand, we learn from Plutarch that there was a temple of the Sun on the Hydaspes, to which the elephants of Porus ascended on the advance of Alexander. Philostratos states that there was a temple of the Sun at Taxila during the time of Alexander's invasion.[4] Thus it appears that both the gods, Sūrya and Viṣṇu, were held in high respect in the Western Punjab. It has already been noted that in the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* we have got a funny story that once Viṣṇu had been resting his head on the end of a bow and the gods sent ants to gnaw the bow-string. The result was that the string snapped and sprang forth upwards, the head of Viṣṇu became severed from his body, and the head fell with the sound of '*ghṛṇi*' and 'on falling it became younder Sun.'[5]

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[1] *Ṛg-Veda*, vii. 63.2; I. 50. 8-9; iv. 13.3.
[2] *Ibid.*, vii. 80.2; 78.3; vii. 75.5.
[3] Chanda, *Archaeology and Vaishṇava Tradition*, MASI. no 5.
[4] Cunningham, *Coins of the Śakas*, pp. 22f.
[5] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, xiv. I. 1. 7-10.

This shows the complete identity of Viṣṇu with the Sun. In later Indian Tantras we find that '*ghṛṇi*' is one of the *Vījas* (*mantra*) of the sun-god.

The statements that the army of Porus ascended the temple of the Sun and also that a Sun temple existed at Taxila are indeed very interesting. R. G. Bhandarkar points out that in the Indian account of the Saura systems there is not the remotest allusion to a temple of the Sun.[1] Varāhamihira, on the other hand, enjoins that installation and consecration of the images and temples of the Sun should be caused to be made by the Magas, who are regarded by the Indians as the Brāhmaṇas or the priestly class of the Śaka community.[2] This leads us naturally to the question—had the Śakas or the Scythians to do anything with the system of the Solar cult prevalent in the Western Punjab in the fourth century B. C.? J. Przyluski has shown that a branch of the Śakas possibly entered India and settled in the Western Punjab as early as the fifth century B. C., and the name Śākala may have some connection with them.[3] It is generally believed that the Śakas came and settled in India in the first century B. C. There was no doubt a fresh immigration of the tribe into India in that period, but at the same time we must note the fact that Patañjali in his *Mahābhāṣya* (*c.* 150 B. C.) while discussing the aphorism "*Śūdrāṇāṃ aniravasitānāṃ*" states incidentally that the Śakas were not untouchables and were not to be "expelled from the dish", and further that they were living outside the boundaries of the Āryāvarta.[4] This shows that by the middle of the second century B. C. the Śakas were already in the country and that though they were foreigners they were not regarded as untouchables. The Sakas must have been associated with the Indian society already in the second century B. C. and this seems to lend some support to the theory of Przyluski. Of course it may be held that Patañjali is referring to the Śakas settled in their original home bordering on India,[1] but in that case even we have to admit that Patañjali's account shows that their culture was held in some respect by the Indians of his time. It is not thus altogether improbable that they contributed something towards the development of the Solar cult in India.

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[1] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism* etc., p. 221.

[2] *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, 60. 19.

[3] *JA*, 1926, p. 13; cf. *JA*, 1929, p. 315-7.

[4] *Mahābhāṣya*, ii. 4.10.

The pre-Christian representation of the Sun-god can be found at Bodh-Gaya and Bhaja. Thus speaking of the figure of the god at Bodh-Gaya, Rowland observes :— "Here (Mahabodhi temple at Bodh-Gaya), as at Bhaja, the Vedic deity is present in an allegorical capacity, with reference to the Buddha's solar character. Sūrya is represented in his chariot, drawn by four horses, and accompanied by the goddess of dawn, Ūṣā, who discharge their arrows at the demons of darkness. This representation of the Sun-god in a quadriga is sometimes interpreted as an influence of Hellenic art, although stylistically there is nothing beyond the iconography to remind us of the characteristic representations of Helios in classical art, in which the Solar chariot is invariably represented in a foreshortened side view.[2]" The figure of Helios riding on a four-horsed chariot, it may be noted in this connection, appears on the coins of the Bactrian kings.[3] The Indian conception of the Sun-god is entirely different and stands in great contrast to that of the Scytho-Iranians. We may, for example, compare the figure of the Sun-god with his boots as represented on some Greek coins[1] with the rockcut relief figure of the Sun at Bhaja, which is approximately of the second century B. C. As Kramrisch says of the Bhaja relief : "The Sun-God with his consort in a chariot is escorted by riders on either of the two surfaces, at a right angle of the rock. Animals' and birds' heads disentangle themselves from the heaving mass of the but faintly differentiated relief on the left surface. But even when the shape becomes articulate the modelling retains its heaving quality, and the figure of the demon, with its bulging body, is entirely borne by a plastic imagination.[2]"

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[1] This view is maintained by S. Konow.

[2] Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India*, p. 54.

[3] Gardner, *BMC*, Pl. 6, fg. 11.

From the above discussions it is thus evident that in the pre-Christian epoch there were *two* distinct Saura sects, one Indian having the Vedic deity Sūrya as its supreme god and the other foreign with its own Sun-god, Helios or Mithra, wearing a characteristically foreign dress. The foreign sect was mainly confined to Western Punjab region and it was only in the later period that it could influence the sect following the Vedic cult. (see also *infra*)

Solar symbols may be traced on the tribal coins of the pre-Christian days. Allan thinks that a large Sun is represented on the Kāda coins, which represent several interesting varieties; on *var*. f. we have the Sun, and on the *rev*. the figure of a horse. He thinks further that on *var*. c. of the same group the standing figure with a sceptre or spear in the left hand and a small bag in the right possibly represents Kārtikeya, "who is similarly represented on coins of Ujjayini.[3]" But the figure appears to be that of the Sun piercing the demon of darkness. The provenance of the Kāda coins is not known but it is generally believed that they were found in the Punjab. The Sun is also supposed to be symbolically represented as the ball from which rays radiate on the coins of the Pañcāla kings Sūryamitra and Bhānumitra. Now, one of the peculiar features of the Pañcāla series of coins is that they represent various gods and goddesses evidently according to the likings of the issuers. Thus it would be risky to draw any inference regarding the existence of any sect from the evidence of those coins. After a study of the above archaeological evidences we may come to the conclusion that— (a) a Saura sect was existing in the Punjab and it was influenced to a large extent by foreign elements; and (b) in other parts of India the Sun-worship became somehow associated with Buddhism (*cf.* the figure of the Sun at Bodh-Gaya and at Bhaja). "Certainly even in primitive Buddhism, Śākyamuni had come to be identified with the Sun-god, and his nativity likened to the rising of another Sun.[1]"

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[1] *Ibid*., Pl. 13, fg. 9.

[2] S. Kramrisch, *Indian Sculptures*, p. 160.

[3] The chariot of the Sun-god is supposed to be drawn by seven horses. For one horse drawing the chariot, see P. D. Deshmukh, *Religion in Vedic Literature*, p. 219.

The evidences at our disposal show that the Saura sect was not very important in the pre-Christian days, possibly because, as already stated, the Vaiṣṇavas had been assimilating much of the Saura elements in Viṣṇu. Another reason for the decline may have been the enmity of the Śaivas, specially the Pāśupatas. Thus the Mahābhārata states :—

"Meanwhile, Rudra of terrible prowess rushed against the celestials. Filled with anger, he tore out the eyes of Bhaga (a name of Sūrya)."

"Excited with anger, he attacked Pūṣan (Sūrya) with his foot. He tore out the teeth of that god as he sat employed in eating the large sacrificial cake.[1]"

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[1] Benjamin Rowland, for Buddhism and Solar cult, *l.c.* p. 53.

Though thus the Vedic cult was in a stage of decline, the Epics have recorded incidental references to the followers of the sun-god. Thus the Rāmāyaṇa (1st century B. C.) speaks of the ascetic *Ūrdhvabāhus* who stood on the river Mandākinī with arms upstretched praying to the Sun.[2] The Mahābhārata informs us that there were a thousand and eight others who worshipped the Sun (lit. Sauras) in the camp of the Pāṇḍavas.[3] The god still found his votaries among the Smārtas and the different *Gṛhyasūtras* enjoin his worship for the attainment of riches, fame and long life.

* * * *

In the early centuries of the Christian era, the Magian Sun-sect made considerable progress in North-India. This was mainly due to the influence of the Śakas who had imbibed strong Iranian elements in their culture before they entered into India. The Śakas were Indianised to a greater extent than any other foreign horde coming to India in the ancient period, and they even got a position of honour in the Indian society.[4] The account of the Great Epic that the four-fold system of caste was prevalent in the Śākadvīpa is a pointer to this direction,[5] while the statement of the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* that Lord Viṣṇu was worshipped in the Śākadvīpa in the form of the Sun shows indirectly the influence of the Scythian Solar cult in India. The same *Purāṇa* and the Epic further inform us that among the Śakas, the Magas were the Brāhmaṇas, the Magadhas the Kṣatriyas, the Mānasas the Vaiśyas, and the Mandagas the Śūdras.

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[1] *Mbh.* xii. 160. 18-19.

[2] *Rāmāyaṇa*, ii. 95.7.

[3] *Mbh.* vii. 82.16.

[4] Chattopadhyaya, *The Śakas in India*, pp. 84-96.

[5] *Mbh*, vi. 11.

> "*Magāśca Māgadhāscaiva Mānasā Mandagāstathā*
> *Magāḥ Brāhmaṇa-bhūyiṣṭhā Magadhāḥ Kṣatriyāstathā*
> *Vaiśyāstu Mānasāsteṣām Śūdrāsteṣāntu Mandagāḥ.*"
> (*Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, II 4.69).

While commenting on the above passage of the *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa*, Śrīdhara Svāmin says :—

> "*Brāhmaṇa-bhūyiṣṭhā*" *pūrvokteṣu sarveṣu Brāhmaṇeṣu madhye śreṣṭhāḥ.*"

Thus the Magas were regarded as high class Brāhmaṇas and they performed the priestly functions of the Scythians in India. The Magas were, no doubt, the Median Magai, and they were responsible for introducing into India a new form of Sun worship. The Magas or the Magai appears to have spread throughout the land and one of their settlements in the extreme south is referred to in the *Geography* of Ptolemy :

> "In like manner the part under Mount Bettigo are occupied by the 'Brakhmanoi Magoi' as far as the Batai with its city : Brakhme..128° 19″."

The "Mount Bettigo" is identical with the Tamil Podegai, *Sk.* Malaya, ranges in the Pāṇḍya kingdom. Here it must be noted, however, that though the Magian priests moved to the extreme south of India, the Indian type of Solar cult generally flourished in the South, while the Magian cult flourished in the North side by side with its Indian counterpart.

As we have already stated, the Magians possibly came and settled in India in the Pre-Alexander period,[1] and we find thus the presence of the Magian Solar symbol on the coins of the Indo-Greek kings who ruled before the coming of the Sakas in India. Thus on a coin of

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[1] In my work, the "Achaemenids in India", I have discussed this question. For an account of the Magi, see *ERE*, vol. viii, pp. 242ff.

Philoxenos we find : 'Sun-god, facing, radiate, clad in chiton, himation and boots; holds in l. hand long sceptre; r. extended.[1]' A somewhat similar figure is found on the coins of Plato, a sub-king belonging to the time of Eucratides possibly. On these we find the figure of Helios "riding on a four-horsed chariot", which, J. N. Banerjea points out, may be compared with the figure of the Sun-god at Bodh-Gaya.[2] If Plato ruled earlier than Philoxenos and Telephus, then on the evidence of the coins we may possibly infer that the Magian Sun-sect was gradually expanding its ground at the cost of the indigenous sect.[3] This indeed appears to be the case, for the archaeological evidences at our disposal unmistakably show the presence of the Magian cult into the interior of India in the early centuries of the Christian era, evidently under the patronage of the Scytho-Kuṣāṇas.

J. N. Banerjea draws our attention to an interesting specimen from N. W. India throwing fresh light on the sect : "A small figure of Sūrya in black slate found in one of the sites of Gandhāra shows the god seated at ease on a chariot drawn by four horses; the sculpture being in an indifferent style of preservation many of the details are lost. But enough remains to show that the god wears boots, is attended by a female figure on either side (the one on the right is broken), and a bearded Atlantos crouches beneath the chariot reminding one of the 'demons' of the aforesaid composition. The artist of Gandhāra seems to have been well-informed about the earlier mode but he introduced some innovations in conformity with the local convention and with the needs of the transformed cult.[1]" In the above figure we find an instance of how the foreign cult was being fused with the indigenous one. This fusion was undoubtedly effected by the Scythians, for it was under their patronage that the Gandhāra school witnessed its flourishing period. According to the *Brahma Yāmala*, the Śaka-Brāhmaṇas of the Gandhāra country were known as *Citrapaṇḍita* or "master artists.[2]" The *Yāmala* seems to have preserved an old tradition which is a reminiscent of the part played by the Śakas in the development of the artistic activities of the Gandhāra country. Sir John Marshall says that "it was during the Scytho-Parthian supremacy that the local school of Buddhist art, known as the Gandhāra school, must first have sprung into being." It combines Greek methods and Indian religious subjects and thus introduces entirely new treatments. This Greco-Gandhāra art, confined at first on the fringe of India, gradually spread its influence all over the country, and "in Hindustan and in Central India it took....an important part in promoting the development of the early National school both by clearing its path of technical difficulties and strengthening its growth with new and invigorating ideas." Its hey-day seems to have begun from the first century, and was over by the time of the descendants of the great Kaniṣka. In the *Cambridge History of India*, I, p. 648, Sir John Marshall writes : "The story of this school belongs to a subsequent chapter; for it was under the rule of Kushāṇa kings that it produced the majority of the sculptures which had made it famous."

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[1] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 140.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

[3] Philoxenos appears to have ruled after Menander in the first century B. C., *EHNI*, p. 38.

We have discussed about the Gandhāra school of Art to some extent to show that the Sūrya image in question, combining Indian and Magian traditions, was inspired by Scythian patronage. In other words, it was under the Scythians that the two different Saura sects of India were gradually merging together. This is best illustrated by the story, as represented by the later *Purāṇas*, no doubt quoting earlier traditions, how Śāmba, the son of Kṛṣṇa by his wife Jāmbavatī, was afflicted with leprosy and he was advised to worship the Sūrya. Hence he constructed a Sun-temple on the bank of the river Candrabhāgā, but the Indian priests refused to officiate there. Consequently, Śāmba imported the Magas from the Śākadvīpa and they did the necessary worship. We are supplied with the following details regarding the Maga-Brāhmaṇas : (a) they were the descendants of Jarasasta or Jarasabda born of the Sun and Nikṣubhā, the daughter of one Brāhmaṇa Sujihva of Mihira gotra; (b) they wore a girdle around their waist and it was known as Avyanga.

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[1] Banerjea, *DHI*, 434.

[2] It may be noted in this connection that "the Gītā authoritatively makes Citraratha foremost of the Gandharvas" (Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 52.,

Jarasasta or Jarasabda evidently refers to Jarathustha or Zoroaster, the ancient prophet of Iran, about whose date there is much controversy. A date ranging from one millenium B. C. to the second century A. D. has been suggested for him. The ancient Syrian theologian Theodore bar Khomi, however, states that "from Zaradusht to the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ are six hundred and twenty eight years and seven months.[1]" This shows that Zoroaster flourished in the seventh century B. C., and Maga Brāhmaṇas or the Magians evidently introduced this Zoroastrian or Avestic cult into India. The Avyanga, on the other hand, signifies the Aivyaonghen of the *Avesta* and is identical with Kushti, akin to the Hindu sacred thread, worn by the Parsis of the present time.

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[1] Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies*, p. 250.

The Magian Sun-cult gradually found its way in the Indian pantheon, while the story of Śāmba shows indirectly that it was being gradually associated with Vaiṣṇavism. The statement of the Mahābhārata that the *Pañcarātras*, a sub-sect of the followers of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, derived their doctrine from the Sun himself is very significant, specially when, as we have already seen, the inspiration of the doctrine came to a large extent from the region lying beyond the frontiers of India. The Saivas, particularly the Pāśupatas, on the other hand, were opposed to the Solar cult and this must have checked its progress to a great extent.[1]

There are two interesting archaeological remains of the period under review throwing new light on the Vedic cult. The first comes from Lala Bhagat, a small village in Kanpur District, U. P., where on a pillar fragment is carved prominently the figure of Sūrya. The cock on the same pillar and the epigraph *Kumāravara*....in characters of the 2nd Century A. D. brings the god in close connection with Kārtikeya-Skanda-Kumāra.[2] The association of Sūrya with Skanda is also supported by literary evidences though of somewhat later date. As Gopinath Rao states: "In the *Bhāgavat-Purāṇa* it is stated that Sūrya began to burn the *asuras* with his heat; the latter thereupon attacked Sūrya. The gods then felt bound to help Sūrya, and with this object in view they left Skanda on the left of Sūrya and Agni on the right. Since Skanda is the punisher of the wicked in the universe, he is called *Daṇḍanāyaka*, and from his reddish yellow colour Agni, the god of fire, obtains the name Piṅgala.[3]"

The second specimen comes from Orissa. The Sūrya relief at Ananta Gumpha in the Khandagiri group of caves shows the prevalence of the Vedic cult in the Kaliṅga region in the first century A. D. Artistically it is certainly a step further in the direction indicated in Bharhut. We find Sūrya on the chariot with his two female companions and drawn by horses. As it has been pointed out "the wicker-work front introduced in the Ananta Gumpha relief facilitates the employment of smooth, elongated and rounded units. They appear again in the bent legs of the horses to which further company is added by the zigzag of the broader, serpent-like and rounded limbs of 'Piṅgala' with staff and pot. The way in which his flabby body and face are modelled and are spread into the surface with great breadth resembles the treatment of the ogress of darkness in the Sūrya relief from Bhaja.[1]"

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[1] *Supra*, p. 176.

[2] *ASIR*, 1929-30, pp. 132-33, pl. xxxi.

[3] Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, i., p. 404.

From the foregoing discussions it is thus clear that the Magian Sun-sect flourished in the early centuries of the Christian era mainly in the region where the Kharoṣṭhī script prevailed extending in the east as far as Mathura. In the rest of India, the Vedic cult still had its sway though it had to face enmity from the Saivaites. The available archaeological data further show that an amalgam of these two different Saura worshippers was on its way and this became practically a finished product in the later period.

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As already stated, with the accession of the Imperial Guptas on the throne of Magadha in *c*. 319-20 A. D. we enter into a new period of Indian history when orthodox Brāhmaṇism got its upper hand in the patronage bestowed by the Imperial crowns. Curiously enough even in this age the Magian Sun cult made further progress and gathered round it votaries from wider area. This feature can only be explained by the supposition that by this time the Magian cult must have spread its influence among the orthodox class, a progress that had already begun in the Scytho-Kuṣāṇa age. Varāhamihira, who lived in this period, enjoins that when a king would construct a temple of the Sun he would appoint Maga-Brāhmaṇas for the worship of the deity. We have already seen that there is no reference to the temple of the Sun in any *Saura Saṃhitā* and Sun-temples came to be constructed under the influence of the Magians. There are at least three inscriptions of the Gupta age referring to the temple of the Sun and they undoubtedly betray Magian influence:

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[1] Barua, *Old Brāhmī Inscriptions in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves*, p. 310.

(a) Mandasor Stone inscription of Kumāra Gupta and Bandhuvarman of the Mālava year 493 and 529 records that while Bandhuvarman was the governor of Daśapura during the time of Kumāra Gupta I, "a noble (and) unequalled temple of the bright-rayed (Sun), was caused to be built by silk-weavers, as a guild, with the stores of wealth acquired by (the exercise of their) craft;—(a temple) which, having broad and lofty spires, (and) resembling a mountain, (and) white as the mass of the risen moon, shines, charming to the eye, having the similarity of (being) the lovely crest-jewel, fixed (in its proper place) of (this) city of the west." These silk-weavers had migrated from the country of Lāṭa viṣaya, or central and southern Gujarat, to the city of Daśapura.

The point to be noted here is that this cult was transported to the Madhya-Pradesh from Western India, which as we have already seen, was the strong-hold of the Magian cult. Further, "the inscription is on a stone slab, apparently rather good and dark sand-stone, built into the wall on the right hand half way down a small flight of steps leading to the river in front of a medieval temple of the god Siva, under the name of Mahādeva, at the Mahādeva-ghāt, which is on the south bank of the river...[1]" This shows that the original Sun temple had been destroyed and the slab was carried from there. Had the Saivaites, who, as we have already seen, were terribly opposed to the Saura cult, anything to do in the demolition of the temple?

(b) The Indor C. P. inscription of Skanda Gupta of the year 146 "records a perpetual endowment by a Brāhmaṇa named Deva-Viṣṇu for the purpose of maintaining a lamp in a temple of the Sun at Indrapura i. e., the modern Indor."

(c) The Gwalior inscription of Mihirakula "records the building of a temple of the Sun, by a person named Mātṛceta, on the mountain called Gopa, i. e., the hill on which the fortress Gwalior stands.[2]"

The provenance of the epigraphic records shows that the Magian Sun cult which was prevalent in Western India in the Scytho-Kuṣāṇa age had extended into the M. P. region by the time of the Guptas. The cult was not evidently still very powerful in the Eastern Gangetic valley, for we have no evidence of the existence of Sun-temple in that region in the Gupta age, though several sealings found at Basarh and Bhita disclose the existence of the sect or cult :—

(i) A seal found by Marshall at Bhita bearing the device of a fire-altar contains the legend *Ādityasya.*

(ii) Basarh seal No. 607 with the same device has on it the legend *Bhagavataḥ Ādityasya.*

(iii) Another Basarh seal No. 9 bears on it the legend *Ravidāsa(ḥ).*

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[1] *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. iii, p. 80.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 162.

There has been some controversy regarding the origin of the fire altar device on these seals. Spooner thinks that it is the remnant of the old Persian fire cult that had been prevalent in India from remote antiquity, while Rapson finds in it traces of the Sassanian influence. J. N. Banerjea points out that such fire-altars are found on the coins of the Pañcāla king Bhānumitra and also on the coins of the early Kuṣāṇa kings Wema Kadphises and others.[1] The Basarh and the Bhita seals show, however, unmistakable Iranian influence, as pointed out by Spooner, and the cult may have been carried to the east by the Sakas who ruled over Eastern India on the eve of the rise of the Guptas. In the *Geography* of Ptolemy, we find the Marundai or the Saka-Muruṇḍas as living on the right bank of the Ganges, to the south of the 'Gangenai" or 'Tanganai' established in the valley of the 'Sarabos', the Sarayū of the Sanskrit texts, the Sarju or Ghogra of modern times. Half a century after Ptolemy, Oppien mentions the 'Māruandien' people, as a Gangetic people living in the Indian plains. According to the Jain traditions, Pāṭaliputra was also under the rule of the Muruṇḍa kings, while on the basis of the Chinese evidences, Levi has shown that the Muruṇḍas ruled in Pāṭaliputra in the centuries just preceding the rise of the Guptas.[2]

Thus it appears that the Sakas possibly introduced the Iranian Sun-cult in Eastern India, and as by the time of the Guptas they had been thoroughly Indianised, their cult found a place in the Brāhmaṇical religion. Thus we find in the *Matsya Purāṇa*, a work of the Gupta age, that if an image of the Sūrya be constructed, the deity should have four arms and a fine moustache, a lustrous body of red colour covered with a coat and be dressed up in the dress of a Northerner. He should also wear round his wrist a *Paniyanga*, which, as Gopinath Rao points out, is a misreading for *abhyanga*.[1] The description is undoubtedly of the Sun-god of the Magian cult. Plate Lvi, in Burgess' *Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujrat* shows that this Sun-god has boots reaching upto the knees, and a girdle round the waist with one end hanging downwards. The dress of the god is entirely Scythian and from the archaeological evidences it is clear that many temples with such idols may have been constructed in India under the influence of the Magi priests.

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[1] Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 198-9.

[2] For an account of the Muruṇḍas, *EHNI*, pp. 51 ff.

We may now note some typical Sūrya images of the Gupta period. As R. D. Banerjee says : "Images of the Sun-god are common. The most beautiful example of the representation of the Sun-god is to be found in a medallion discovered at Bhumra where the figure is of the type of a Scythian king. It is robed exactly like Kanishka as seen in his statue discovered at Mat in the Mathura district. There are no horses in the Bhumra medallion but there are seven such on the *liṅga* from Kaman in the Ajmer Museum.[2]" The Sūrya image found at Khair Khanch, and now preserved in the Kabul Museum, shows the god seated on a chariot while its horses are being driven by Aruṇa, (JISOA, XVI). In these figures we find an amalgam of the alien solar cult with the Indian one, and this process which practically began in the Gupta age, ended in the complete fusion of the two rival Saura sects.

While thus an alien Sun cult had gradually been making its head-way in North-India, the Saura sects of the South adhered strictly to the Indian tradition. In the icons of the age, the god is represented as bare-footed and the hands are lifted upto the level of the shoulders, or in some cases, as pointed out already, the god is sitting on a chariot drawn by seven horses, and having Ūṣā and Pratyūṣā by his sides. The famous Gudimallam Sūrya image may be ascribed to the Gupta age. The figure has its hands lifted up to the shoulder, the legs are bare and there is a girdle around the wrist. In the following account T. A. Gopinath Rao has summarised a fine contrast of the North Indian and the South Indian images :—"It may be seen that there are two varieties among these images, namely, the North Indian and the South Indian. Each of these possesses very marked peculiarities which are easy of recognition. The South Indian figures of Sūrya have, as a rule, their hands lifted up as high as the shoulders, and are made to hold lotus flowers which are only half-bloomed; the images have invariably the *udarabandha*, and their legs and feet are always left bare. The North Indian images, on the other hand, have generally their hands at the natural level of the hips or the elbows, and are made to carry full-blown lotuses which rise up to the level of the shoulders, and their fore-legs have coverings resembling modern socks more or less in appearance and the feet are protected with a pair of foot-wear resembling boots. The *udarabandha* is not found in the Northern variety of the images of the Sun-god, but there is a thin cloth or a sort of coat of mail shown as being worn on the body. The South Indian images are as often with the seven horses.... The common features of both Southern and Northern varieties of Sūrya are that the head is in all cases adorned with a *Kirīṭa* surrounded by a circular halo or *Prabhāmaṇḍala*, and that in several instances the characteristic seven horses and their driver Aruṇa are not missing.[1]"

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[1] Gopinath Rao, *l.c.*, p. 308.

[2] R. D. Banerjea, *The Age of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 126.

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[1] Gopinath Rao, *l.c.*, pp. 311-12.

We have quoted the above lines only to show that though there were two distinct types of Solar sects in India, some common features were being evolved between the two which ultimately helped them in completely merging together. This fusion is specially marked in the *Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa*, and the famous *Āditya-hṛdayaṃ* occurring in the work is perhaps the best product of this fusion and is studied with respect by all Sun-worshippers of the present day.

In the age succeeding the period of the Guptas, we find that Solar cult was receiving favours from the royal thrones. From the *Harṣa Carita* it is clear that Harṣa's father was an ardent devotee of the Sun and he offered his daily prayer to the god "kneeling eastwards upon the ground in a circle smeared with saffron paste.[1]" In the epigraphic records Prabhākaravardhana and his father and grandfather Ādityavardhana and Rājyavardhana I are described as *Āditya-bhaktas*. J. N. Banerjea thinks that these members of the Vardhana house were followers of the Indo-Scythian cult,[2] but the evidences at our disposal do not permit us to draw such a definite conclusion. The *Life*, on the other hand, while giving an account of Harṣa's Prayāga assembly, informs us that on the second day of the festival, the image of *Ādityadeva* was worshipped with due pomp and splendour. As Harṣa constructed no temple of the Sun, it may be inferred that the god was worshipped after the traditional Indian fashion. In this connection, it may be noted further that Mayura, the court-poet of Harṣa, composed a work on the god consisting of hundred verses.

Even at the present day, the Indians of different ranks worship the Sun with devotion. That a similar practice was prevalent in the ancient period becomes apparent from the description of the Sun temple on the river Candrabhāgā, which, as already stated, is supposed to have been constructed by Sāmba, the son of Kṛṣṇa. Thus while speaking of Mou-lo-san-pu-lu, the pilgrim states: "Among the temples of other religions was a magnificent one to Sun-deva, the image was of gold ornamented with precious substances, it had marvellous powers and its merits had extended far; there was a constant succession of females performing music, lights were kept burning all night, and incense and flowers were continually offered, the kings and grandees of all India gave precious substances as religious offerings and erected free rest-houses with food, drink and medicine for the sick and needy. At this temple there were constantly 1000 pilgrims from various lands offering up prayers. All round the temple were tanks and flowery woods making a delightful resort.[1]"

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[1] *Harṣacarita*, tr. Cowell & Thomas, p. 104.

[2] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 432.

The account clearly shows how the alien Sun-cult had been growing in popularity in India. The traveller speaks of another temple of the Sun-god in Kānyakūbja[2] and it was also evidently a centre of the new Sun-cult.

While thus in North India the alien and the indigenous Solar sects were flourishing side by side on the eve of the rise of Saṃkara, in South India, where the Indian sect mainly predominated, the cult was gradually coming under the influence of Tāntricism. This is clear from Ānanda Giri's account of Saṃkara's meeting with the Saura leader Divākara. The great philosopher was informed that there were six sub-sects of the Sauras using marks of red sandal paste, wearing garlands of red flowers and repeating the *mantra* of eight syllables. Of these, the sixth class followed Tāntric method and imprinted with a heated iron piece marks of the orb on the forehead, arms and breasts. All these sub-sects followed, however, the Vedic precepts and at the same time chanted the eight syllable *mantra*. They identified the Ādityadeva with Rudra and Viṣṇu and held that he was not only creator of this universe, but also its ultimate destroyer. Thus the Sauras held that Āditya (in the view of the philosophical doctrine propounded by Saṃkara) was the *nimitta-kāraṇaṃ* of this world, a theory similar to one maintained by the Pāśupatas in case of Siva. The Pāśupatas are criticised for their alleged wrong conception by Śaṃkara, who, however, says nothing in his great commentary regarding the Sauras. This possibly shows that the Sauras were not a very influential sect in his time.

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[1] Watters, *On Yuan Chwang*, ii, p. 254.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 352.

APPENDIX

Was There a Kārtikeya Sect?

In the early centuries of the Christian era a new sect, the Kārtikeyas, came to the forefront as proved by the following archaeological records :—

(a) tribal coins and seals hailing from the Eastern Punjab, Ujjayinī, Rohtak, Bhita and Ayodhya;
(b) the coins of the Kuṣāṇa king Huviṣka;
(c) the Kanakhera Stone inscription of the Saka chief Srīdharavarman.

Among the tribal coins representing the figure of Kārtikeya, we may note particularly the issues of the Audumbara tribe. The god on these coins is represented in the form of a warrior holding a spear in his right hand. The Audumbaras may be located "in the area formed by the eastern part of the modern Kangra district, the Gurdaspur district and Hoshiarpur district, that is to say the valley of the Beas, or perhaps the wider region between the upper Sutlej and the Ravi.[1]" On the Ujjayinī coins, *Class* 2, "is a deity whom we have identified as Kārtikeya, since he holds a spear; on *Var.* 1 he is shown with three heads; the other three are behind and naturally not represented because they cannot be seen; so that he is six-headed—which identifies him as Kārtikeya.[2]" On *Class*

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[1] Allan, *l.c.* p. lxxxvii.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. cxliii.

3, we have a very crude representation of the god, while the deity is represented on *Class* 5, *Var.* (a) also. J. N. Banerjea, however, thinks that the figure on the Ujjayinī coins represents Siva and not Kārtikeya.[1] There cannot be any doubt that the god Kārtikeya is represented on the coins of Vijayamitra of Ayodhya by the symbol 'cock on the top of post.'[2] In the *Mahāmayurī*, the country of Rohitaka is associated with Kārtikeya-Kumāra; evidently, Rohitaka, modern Rohtak, was an important centre of the sect. Here Sahani discovered a large number of coin-moulds of the Yaudheyas showing that it was the homeland of the tribe possibly in the second century A. D.[3] Allan has pointed out that there are some coins of the tribe bearing the epigraph *Yaudheya-Bhagavata-Svāmino Brāhmaṇya* (*sa* or *sya*). On another class the inscription is *Bhagavata-Svāmino Brahmaṇya-devasya* (or *sa*) *Kumārasya* (or *sa*).[4] The Yaudheyas evidently had dedicated their state to the god and the *gaṇa* ruled on his behalf. Kārtikeya was the lord of war and this dedication possibly points to some warlike activities of the tribe in the second century. In this connection we may note that in the Junagadh inscription of Mahākṣatrapa Rudradāman, the Yaudheyas are described as indomitable and when we find that the said record makes no mention of the Kuṣāṇas,[5] together with the fact that there is no Kuṣāṇa record for seven (three ?) years from 138 to 145 (*c.* 142 ?) A. D., it may be presumed that the Yaudheyas had pushed the Kuṣāṇas to the background, and there are further reasons for believing that they took an important part in supplanting the Kuṣāṇas from the heart of India.[1] Thus the Yaudheyas had been fighting on constantly and hence they naturally invoked the aid of the great war-god Skanda.

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[1] Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 117.

[2] Smith, *Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum*, vol. i, p. 151, nos. 31 & 32; cf. Allan, *l.c.*, p. lxxxix.

[3] For the history of the Yaudheyas, *EHNI*, pp. 120 f.

[4] Allan, *l.c.*, p. 276.

[5] *Ep. Ind.*, viii., pp. 42ff.

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On a terra-cotta seal discovered by Marshall at Bhita we find the inscription: "*Of the illustrious Mahārāja Gautamīputra Vṛṣadhvaja, the penetrator of the Vindhyas, who had made over his kingdom to the great lord Kārtikeya.*" Mahārāja Gautamīputra Vṛṣadhvaja evidently belonged to the dynasty of the Megha rulers of Kauśāmbī who were ultimately exterminated by first Gupta mahārājādhirāja Candra Gupta.[2] This shows that the dynasty had to guard itself against the rising power of the Guptas and this accounts for the dedication of the kingdom to the war-god.

The Kanakhera inscription of Srīdharavarman shows that the Śaka chief was a devotee of Kārtikeya.[3] He evidently carved out a kingdom for himself in the Sanchi region when the Saka kingdom was passing through its hard days. Thus his position was beset with difficulties and this shows why he became a devotee of Skanda-Kārtikeya.

The above discussions evidently show that the god Skanda was specially invoked whenever a person or a tribe faced difficulties. This becomes clear from the following description of the characteristics of the god as given by Hopkins:

> "Skanda is a composite god. First there is Agni Kumāra the 'ever youthful', with whom first Skanda was formally identified. On the other hand, as son of Agni, Skanda was identified with all burnings

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[1] *EHNI*, pp. 120ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 116-7.

[3] *JASB*, xix. p. 341.

(fevers) and other afflictions. The god who represented fire and affliction was naturally associated with the troops of afflicting beings grouped about Siva and so became 'son of Siva', the more readily as the 'hidden' god of mystery was naturally associated with the hidden places at the mountains (*Guha* and *Guhya*). The 'holiest night' is *Kārttikī*. As the association of six-faced Skanda with the six mother-stars seems as old a trait as any, it may well be to derive the name Kārtikeya from the stars themselves, who are the divinity of the Sword (War) and regents directly of war, as well as those who govern the month when war begins.[1]"

The Epic and the Purāṇic mythology describes Skanda or Kārtikeya as the son of Siva. It is, however, difficult to determine when those two sects, Saivas and the Kārtikeyas, came nearer to each other with a view to compromise, for the archaeological evidences recorded above tend to show that the sect had hardly any connection with the Saivas. The Epics record various stories regarding the exploits of the god Kārtikeya but they have hardly any historical significance. More interesting is the account of the *Mahābhāṣya* referring to the images of Siva, Skanda and Viśākha being sold by the Mauryas in their greed of gold.[2] The work states further that these images were being made for worship during its time (*c.* 150 B. C.). There is no evidence, however, that a Skanda sect had come into existence in the time of Patañjali. The separate mention of Skanda and Viśākha is rather interesting. It shows that though in the later days both were the names of one and the same god, originally they were distinct divinities. In the Mahābhārata, it is stated that Viśākha arose from the right side of Skanda when the latter was struck by Indra's thunderbolt. As R. G. Bhandarkar says, 'This is indicative of the tendency to make the two as one person, and they appear to have been so made in later times."[1] Levi has made the interesting observation that Skanda represents the deification of Alexander the Great. The theory is no doubt a very interesting one, but as it goes against all the notions of the Brāhmaṇical mythology it is difficult to accept the same in the present state of our knowledge.

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[1] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, pp. 229 f.

[2] *Mahābhāṣya*, on Pāṇini, v. 3.99.

J. N. Banerjea draws our attention to the coins of Huviṣka which represent the figures of Skanda-Kumāra, Viśākha and Mahāsena. He has pointed out that Bhandarkar's theory that there are four figures corresponding to the four different gods Skanda, Kumāra, Viśākha and Mahāsena cannot be accepted for there are really three figures and not four.[2] We have already seen that Patañjali makes a distinction between Skanda and Viśākha, though in later mythology both are regarded as one and the same god. The Epic states that the god after his birth approached Rudra in the form of Skanda; Umā, the daughter of Himavat, as Viśākha; Agni as Sākha; and, Ganges or Gaṅgā as Naigameya.[3] In these four names we can really detect two sets of gods : Skanda, Sākha and Naigameya are different aspects of god Agni, while Viśākha forms a class by himself. Rudra, as we have already seen, had some connections with the old fire cult and as such Skanda-Sākha-Naigameya came to be associated with him, as one single god and became Rudra's son. Viśākha, as his association with Umā shows, may have been a minor deity of the Himalayan region and ultimately became associated with the Mother-Goddess of the mountain tracts. When Umā became Rudra-Siva's wife, naturally Viśākha became identified with Skanda-Sākha-Naigameya, the other son of Rudra. The coin of Huviṣka is important as showing that this fusion had not yet been an accomplished fact in the first half of the second century A. D.

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[1] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism* etc., p. 215.

[2] Banerjea, *DHI*, pp. 145-6.

[3] Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 228.

The Skanda or Kārtikeya sect was thus an amalgam of several minor sects and it never became an important factor in the religious life of the Indians.

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Index

Ābhīras, 38f, 71f
Abhyanga, 187
Achaemenian, 1, 91
Achyuta, 45
Adarśa, 14
Adarśana, 14
Aditi, 151f
Āditya, 58, 185, 189, 191
Ādityadeva, 191
Ādityavardhana, 189
Ādyā-Śakti, 151
Āgamas, 145f
Āgama Śaivism, 141, 145f
Āgamic Śaivism, 145
Agasti, 149
Aghora, 101, 114, 132, 144
Aghorapanthins, 135
Aghorī, 135
Agni, 4f, 8f, 16, 47, 90, 99, 153f, 182, 194
Agnihotra, 132
Agnimitra, 4
Agrawala, V. S. 42, 93, 138
Ahibradhna, 167
Ahicchatra, 51f, 146
Ahina, 11
Aihole, 86
Aikāntika, 24
Airakina, 63
Aikāntika, 24
Airāvata, 47
Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 26, 91
Aivyasnghen, 181
Aja, 8
Akrura, 53
Alexander, 5, 72, 172, 178, 196
Allahabad Pillar inscription, 30
Allan, 47, 109, 156, 175, 193
Altekar, A. S., 126
Alvars, 88f
Ambikā, 153, 167
Amitābha, 16, 61
Amma, 154
Āmratakeśvara, 129
Anādhṛṣṭi, 53
Ānanda Giri, 190
Ananta, 45
Ananta Gumpha, 183
Andal, 87, 89
Andhakas, 38f
Aṅgirasa, 38
Aniruddha, 39, 53, 66, 131
Antialkidas, 29
Antonius, 138
Anu-Gītā, 39
Anus, 11
Ardhanārīśvara, 138ff
Arjuna, 3, 30ff, 39ff, 44, 107
Arjunāyana, 30f
Aruṇa, 188
Arvars, 87
Aryandom, 13
Aryans, 1ff, 6f, 27, 46, 99, 103, 117, 151f, 165
Āryāvarta, 13, 90, 173
Asirgadh seal, 147
Aśoka, 6
Aṣṭādhyāyī, 3, 30, 60, 92
Asura, 3
Āsuri, 131
Aśvamedha, 80
Aśvatthāmā, 134
Āśvins, 8
Atharvaśiras Upaniṣad, 142
Atharva-Veda, 90, 95, 97, 108 135f

Atikāya, 160
Atlantos, 179
Atri, 149
Audumbara, 102, 109f, 192
Austric, 7, 12
Austro-Asiatic, 101
Austroloid, 10
Avatāra, 12, 56f, 59, 62ff, 129
Avesta, 181
Avyanga, 181
Ayamukha, 169
Ayodhyā, 4, 169, 192f
Ayyar, Narayana, 117

Bactrian, 174
Bagchi, P. C., 20f, 44, 105, 166
Bāgvali, 131
Bāhlikas, 91
Bala, 45
Bālacarita, 69
Baladeva, 3, 40, 44ff, 53, 94
Balarāma, 42, 52, 69, 74, 88
Balibandha, 42
Bāṇa, 129, 141, 167ff
Bandhuvarman, 80, 184
Banerjea, J. N., 53, 109, 121, 159, 179, 186, 193, 196
Banerjee, R. D., 100, 187
Barbaras, 164
Barnett, 89
Basarh Seal, 129, 185f
Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra, 13, 29, 34f, 73, 98
Besnagar inscription, 29, 34, 36, 40ff, 58
Bettigo, 178
Bhadrā, 156
Bhadraghoṣa, 156
Bhadrakālī, 155
Bhaga, 176
Bhagavad-Gītā, 6, 11, 28, 31, 39, 41, 48, 60, 106
Bhāgavata, 51, 82, 108, 120
Bhāgavata-Pāñcarātra, 66
Bhāgavata-Purāṇa, 117, 182
Bhāgavatism, 78
Bhairava, 119
Bhaja, 174f, 183
Bhalānas, 11
Bhāmatī, 141
Bhandarkar, D. R., 30
Bhandarkar, R. G., 23, 31, 44, 71, 100, 106, 126, 137
Bhānumitra, 176, 186
Bharata, 11, 46, 54
Bharhut, 183
Bhāsa, 69
Bhāskaravarman, 141
Bhava, 90f, 134
Bhavabhūti, 137, 165
Bhaveśa 160
Bhaviṣya Purāṇa, 189
Bhīma, 90
Bhimādevī, 163
Bhīṣma, 54, 70f
Bhita, 185f, 192, 194
Bhita liṅgas, 97, 100
Bhitari Pillar inscription, 81
Bhrānta-yogindra, 88
Bhṛgu, 56
Bhumra, 127
Bhutatt'arvar, 87, 89
Bhūta-yogindra, 88
Bodhisattva, 61
Brahmā, 4, 55, 58, 127, 138
Brahman, 85, 96, 119, 126
Brāhmaṇical, 15ff, 133, 136, 156, 167, 170, 187, 196
Brāhmaṇism, 133, 183
Brahma-Sūtra, 66, 133, 141
Brahmāvarta, 132
Brahma-Yāmala, 180
Brāhmī, 6, 101, 127, 139, 165
Buddha, 33, 38, 49, 57, 150, 174
Buddhism, 16
Buddhist, 2, 4, 12, 15f, 18, 60f, 70, 74, 96, 150, 169
Burgess, 187

Cakrapālita, 81
Cakrapāṇi, 79
Cāmuṇḍā, 165
Caṇḍī, 157, 168
Caṇḍī-māhatmya, 166, 168
Caṇḍīśatakam, 168
Candra, 78

Candrabhāgā, 181, 190
Candrāpīḍa, 169
Candra Gupta II, 78ff, 112, 125, 127, 130, 194
Candra Gupta Maurya, 93
Candravarman, 52, 78
Cāṇura, 74
Cārudevī, 80
Cārvāka, 12
Cedis, 37
Chammak inscription, 79
Chāmuṇḍā, 167
Chan-chu, 83
Chanda, R. P., 117
Chandasām mātā, 153
Chaṇḍa, 167
Chaṇḍikā, 167
Chatreśvara, 109
China inscription, 52
Chinese, 20, 83, 169, 186
Christ, 71f
Christianity, 59f, 71f
Citraśkhaṇḍin, 55f
Col Lake, 166
Comari, 154
Coomaraswamy, 63, 68
Cuneiform inscription, 91
Cunningham, 168
Curtius, 172

Dadhīci, 117
Dagistan, 166
Dags, 166
Dakṣa, 17, 96, 114, 117ff, 151
Dakṣa-Prajāpati, 117
Dāmodara, 34, 73
Damodarpur Copper plate, 127, 129
Damodarpur inscription, 62f
Dandekar, 139
Daṇḍanāyaka, 182
Daśaratha, 57f
Daśārya, 88
Das Gupta, S. N., 35, 87f, 133, 141, 184
Dawn, 151, 172
Devadāra forest, 129
Devakī, 38, 163
Devarāja, 20
Dhanañjaya, 47
Dhānyamālinī, 160
Dhanyaviṣṇu, 63
Dharasena II, 82
Dharma, 49, 54
Dhenukā, 71
Dhṛtarāṣṭra, 47
Dhruvasena I, 82
Dion, 29
Dionysios, 5, 44ff, 93f, 101
Dionysios-Paśupati, 97
Divākara, 190
Divodās, 11
Drāviḍa, 87, 187
Dravidian, 1, 79ff, 103f, 119, 133, 138, 145, 151, 154, 164f, 168f
Durgā, 153, 155f, 159ff, 169
Duryodhana, 37, 42
Dvārakā, 38
Dyauspitā, 8

Eklingaji, 109, 130
Eliot, 19, 73
Emesa, 138
Emusha, 58
Ephedra Pachyclada, 95
Epthalite, 140
Eran inscription, 63
Eucratides, 179

Fa-hsien, 83
Fa-la-na, 147
Fan-Chih, 143
Farquhar 54, 69, 71, 88, 116, 145
Fleet, 84, 165
Frazer, 137

Gaja-lakṣmī, 4
Gaṇapati, 22f
Gāṇapatya, 22
Gandhamādana, 129
Gandhāra, 95, 105, 122, 179f
Gandhārin, 95
Gandharva, 3, 105
Gaṇeśa, 22, 139
Gaṇeśvara, 139

Gaṅgā, 148, 196
Gaṅgādvāra, 129
Gangdhar Stone ins., 164, 167
Gārga, 113
Gārgya, 130, 149
Garuḍa, 29
Gauḍapāda, 63
Gaurī, 154f
Gautama forest, 129
Gautamīputra Vṛṣadhvaja, 194
Gāyatrī, 13, 28, 92, 114, 165, 171
Geography, 72, 178, 186
Ghora, 38
Ghosundi, 36, 40, 42
Girīśa, 93
Giritra, 93
Girivraja, 122f
Gītā, 38, 48f, 56, 170
Gokarna, 129
Gokula, 70
Goloka, 61
Gonarda, 43
Gonda, J, 31f, 44f
Gondopharnes, 121
Gopa, 185
Gopāla, 69
Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa, 37, 51, 70, 74f, 85
Gopati, 95
Gopinath Rao, 100, 182, 187
Goswami, K. G. 47, 62, 74, 79
Govardhana, 70, 74
Govinda, 34, 50, 73, 81
Govindācārya, 65
Greco-Gandhāra, 180
Greco-Indian, 122
Greek, 16, 29, 122, 175, 178
Grierson, 54
Gudimallam, 17, 97, 100, 188
Gunaighar record, 125, 127
Guntert, 139
Gupta, 56, 69, 77ff, 112, 122, 125ff, 141, 165f, 183, 186f, 194
Gwalior ins., 127, 185

Haimaka, 129
Haimavatī, 153
Hallisa, 69, 76
Haradatta, 43
Haraha ins., 141
Harappan, 11, 102f, 151ff, 160
Harappan-Dravidian, 11
Hari, 54, 83,
Haridatta, 47
Hari-Hara 140
Harivaṃśa, 68ff, 74, 76, 129, 140, 163, 169
Harṣa, 167
Harṣavardhana, 141, 189
Haug, 91
Hazra, 144
Heliodoros, 24, 29, 41, 58
Helios, 174f
Hellenic, 174
Heracles, 5, 34f, 47, 93
Heracles-Viṣṇu, 172
Himalayas, 47, 95, 129, 154, 196,
Himavat, 196
Hiranyakaśipu, 58
Hittite, 103
Hopkins, 31, 36, 47, 96, 103, 119, 160, 194
Hrozny, 103
Hṛṣikeśa, 45
Hutton, 24
Huviṣka, 105, 139f, 158f, 162, 192, 196f
Hydaspes, 172

Indo-European, 103f
Indo-Greek, 178
Indra, 4f, 7ff, 16, 32, 47, 68, 70, 91, 196
Indramitra, 4
Indrapura, 185
Indus, 10f, 104f, 121
Iranian, 90f, 186
Īśāna, 90, 101, 108, 114, 132, 144, 149
Īśānavarman, 141
Ishtar, 160, 164
Ishtar-Nana, 158, 161
Īśvarā, 128, 146

Jacobi, 57, 138
Jaimini Bhārata, 73

Jaina, 12, 38, 69, 186
Jainism, 2, 51
Jālandhara, 128, 146
Jāmbavatī, 82
Jāṃbāvatī, 82
Janārdana, 31
Janārdana-Viṣṇu, 38
Jarasabda, 181
Jarāsandha, 37, 122
Jarasastra, 181
Jarathusthā, 181
Jaydratha-yāmala, 21
Jayavarman II, 21
Junagadh inscription, 64, 81

Kāda, 175
Kadamba, 127
Kādambarī, 169
Kadphises I, 121, 186
Kadphises II, 121
Kailāsa, 114
Kālakavana, 14
Kālāmukha, 137
Kālañjara, 129f
Kālī, 155, 161, 167
Kālidāsa, 128, 154
Kaliṅga, 183
Kāliya, 68, 74
Kalki, 57
Kalpasūtra, 65
Kāmarūpa, 141
Kambuja, 20
Kaṃśa, 42ff, 68, 70, 72, 74
Kaṃśavadha, 42f, 70
Kanakhera ins., 192, 194
Kanauj, 47
Kāñcī, 88
Kaniṣka, 16, 56, 180
Kānyakubja, 82
Kanyākumārī, 153f
Kāpālika, 128, 135ff, 141f, 148
Kapardin, 90
Kapila, 112, 125f, 131
Kapilānda, 149
Kapileśvara, 112, 125
Kāpiśa, 135
Karālī, 153, 155
Kārtikeya, 22, 32, 149, 175, 192ff,
Kārtikeya-Skanda-Kumāra, 182
Kāruṇikasiddhāntins, 4
Kaṣāyayogin, 88
Kaśyapa, 58
Kaṭha Upaniṣad, 139
Katyāyanī, 153
Kaumārī, 165
Kauṇḍinya, 114f, 131f
Kaurava, 3, 14
Kauruṣya, 113, 149
Kauśāmbī, 4, 194
Kauśikī, 162f
Kautsīputra Bhagabhadra, 29
Kaverī, 87
Kayārohana, 113, 129f
Kāyāvatāra, 113
Kedāra, 148
Keith, 22, 25, 27, 43f, 38, 73,
  104, 110
Kena Upaniṣad, 154
Kentum, 103
Keśava, 42
Keśin, 74
Khaṇḍagiri, 183
Khandava, 120
Kharoṣṭhī, 183
Khoh Copper Plate ins., 77, 127
Kirāta, 38
Kokāmukhā, 162
Kotivarṣa, 129f
Krishṇa, 5, 33, 82
Kṛṣṇa, 22f, 32, 37f, 42, 44, 46,
  52ff, 69ff, 88, 122, 131, 181, 190
Kṛṣṇa-Govardhana-dhara, 68
Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, 38, 58, 69
Kṛtamālā, 87
Kṣitigarbha, 16
Kṣudraka, 94
Kubjikāmata Jantra, 19f
Kueyash, 103
Kula-śekhara Perumal, 87
Kumāra, 90
Kumāra Gupta, 80, 127, 184
Kuninda, 109
Kuntala, 79
Kūrma avatāra, 57f
Kūrma Purāṇa, 142, 145
Kuru, 3, 39, 47

Kurukṣetra, 37
Kuṣāṇa, 16ff, 39, 51f, 61, 67f, 105, 112, 124, 138, 140, 158, 163, 186, 192ff
Ku-sa-tan-na, 147
Kushān, 109
Kushāṇa, 180
Kushti, 181
Kuśika, 112f, 130, 132, 149
Kuyash, 103

Lakṣmaṇa, 54
Lakṣmī, 4, 156
Lakuli, 113, 116, 123, 126, 130, 132, 148
Lakulin, 142, 148
Lakulīśa, 112-149
Lakulīśa-Pāśupata, 125-149
Lakulīśa-Pāśupatism, 114
Lala Bhagat, 182
Lamaism, 20
Lang-kie (ka)- 10, 147
Lassen, 60
Lāṭa, 123, 148, 184
Levi, 16, 94, 136, 186, 196
Life, 169, 189
Liṅga Purāṇa, 113, 142, 144f
Liṅgāyat, 115
Luders, 53

Macdonel, 9, 22
Macnicol, 72f
Mādhava, 88, 133
Madhu, 81
Madhura-Kaviyarvar, 87
Madhusūdana, 81
Madhyadeśa, 13f, 62, 127
Maga, 173, 177f, 181, 184
Magadha, 37, 78, 123, 126, 177, 183
Magi, 187
Magian, 15, 22, 178f, 181f, 183f, 185
Mahābhārata, 14f, 17, 24, 27, 31, 35f, 38, 41, 44f, 46, 54f, 58, 61, 67, 72, 95
Mahābhāṣya, 3, 5, 13, 41ff, 70, 94, 109, 173
Mahācina, 151
Mahādeva, 90, 110, 118, 122, 156
Mahādeva-ghāt, 185
Mahādeva-Śiva, 92
Mahākāla, 128, 168
Mahākālī, 118ff, 155
Mahākṣatrapa, 193
Mahāmayurī, 94, 193
Mahāsena, 196
Mahā Umāmagga Jātaka, 82
Mahāvṛṣa, 95
Mahāyāna, 16, 61, 163
Mahendrī, 165
Maheśvara, 96, 113, 117, 126, 130, 141f, 147, 155, 168
Maheśvarapura, 147
Māheśvarī, 165
Maitraka, 127
Maitrāyanī Saṃhitā, 2, 28, 92
Maitrāyanī Upaniṣad, 28
Makhaghna, 117
Malakūṭa, 147f
Mālatimādhavam, 137, 165
Mālava, 147
Mallikārjuna, 128
Malipura, 88
Mānasa, 177
Mandaga, 177
Mandākinī, 177
Mandasor inscription, 80, 184
Māndhātā, 167
Maṅgala Kāvyas, 157
Manikka Vachkar, 145
Mañjuśrī 16
Manu, 27, 54, 56, 58
Manuṣyaka, 149
Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 166, 168
Marshall, J., 10, 97, 102, 104, 129, 157f, 180, 185, 194
Maruts, 8
Mataṅga Āgama, 146
Mathurā, 14, 30, 38, 41, 48, 51, 126, 138
Mathura Pillar ins., 111, 125, 130
Mātṛceta, 185
Matsya avatāra, 57
Matsya Purāṇa, 75, 186
Maues, 121

Maukhari, 140f
Maurya, 5, 16, 157ff, 169, 189
Mayurakshaka, 165
Median, 178
Megasthenes, 14, 30, 41 44, 93, 97, 101f, 155
Megha, 194
Meghadūta, 128
Meherauli ins., 78
Meru, 55f, 60, 166
Mihira, 137
Mihirakula, 127, 140, 185
Mihiralakṣmī, 136
Mihireśvara, 136
Mir-emuin, 139
Mitra, 8, 113, 130
Mithra, 175
Mohenjo-daro, 10, 102
Mo-hi-ssu-fa-lo-pu-la, 147
Mo-la-po, 147
Mo-lo-ku-ta, 147
Mongoloid, 100
Mother Goddess, 15, 19, 150ff, 197
Mujavat, 91, 95
Muṇḍā, 167
Muṇḍamālā Tantra, 166
Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 155
Mura, 84
Muradviṣ, 84
Muruṇḍa, 186
Muṣṭika, 74

Na-fo-ti-po-ku-ol, 82f
Nāga, 3f, 46f, 51, 69, 74, 101
Nāganikā, 40
Nāgasiri, 101
Naigameya, 196
Naimiṣa, 129
Nakuli, 130
Nala, 86, 127
Namm-Arvar, 87, 89
Nana, 160
Nana-Ishtar, 162
Nanaghat ins., 40, 52
Nanda, 69, 71f, 162
Nara, 31, 54
Nārada, 17, 59
Narasiṃha avatāra, 58
Naravarman, 81
Nārāyaṇa, 4, 24ff, 31, 33, 35ff, 45, 54, 56, 58f, 65, 80, 90, 120, 164
Nārāyaṇa-Hari, 17, 59
Nārāyaṇa vāṭaka, 40
Nārāyaṇī, 164
Nātha, 130
Navapatrikā, 160
Nāyanikā, 52, 86, 88
Nestorian, 60, 72f
Ngo-hi-chi-ta-lo, 146
Niddesa, 3f
Nikṣubhā, 181
Nīlakaṇṭha, 90
Nīla-lohita, 104
Nīla Tantra, 166
Nirmand Copper plate ins., 136
Nirṛiti, 154f
Niśumbha, 163, 167
Niśvāsa-Saṃhitā, 19
Niśvāsa-tattva-Saṃhitā, 21
Nṛsiṃha, 63
Nṛsiṃha-tāpanīya Upaniṣad, 63
Nysians, 93

Oesa, 160
Omma, 161
Oppien, 186
Oxydrakai, 94

Padmanābha, 109
Padmasambhava, 20
Paharpur, 74f
Paktha, 11
Pallava, 79, 128
Palusha, 168
Pamir, 95, 166
Pañcāla, 4f, 47, 52, 156, 176, 186
Pāñcarātra, 17, 39, 51ff, 82, 84, 120, 182
Pāñcarātrika, 24
Pañcaśikha, 131
Pañcavīras, 53
Pāṇḍava, 14, 177
Pāṇḍya, 148, 155, 178
Pāṇini, 3, 6, 24, 30ff, 41, 44, 92f

Panis, 11
Paragārgya, 149
Parāśara, 112f, 126
Paraśurāma, 59
Pargiter, 167
Pāriyātra, 14
Parjanya, 8
Parsi, 181
Pārtha, 149
Pārvatī, 153
Pāṣaṇḍa, 145
Pāśupata, 17, 64, 93, 96, 115, 118, 120-149, 169, 176, 191
Pāśupata Sūtra, 65, 113, 116, 123, 131f, 141
Paśupati, 102, 123, 141
Pāśupatism, 115, 148
Patala, 13, 163
Pāṭaliputra, 127, 186
Patañjali, 5, 32f, 37, 41ff, 85, 93f, 107ff, 173f
Payasvinī, 87
Payne, 161, 166
Periplus of the Erythraen Sea, 72, 154f
Periyar, 87
Pey-arvar, 87, 89
Philostratos, 172, 179
Piṅgala, 149, 182f
Plato, 179
Plutarch, 142
Podegai, 178
Poona ins. of Prabhāvati Gupta, 79
Porus, 172
Poygaiar, 89
Poygaiyarvar, 87
Prabhākaravardhana, 167, 189
Prabhāsa, 148
Prabhāvatī Guptā, 79, 86
Pradyumna, 39, 53ff, 66, 131
Prahlāda, 86
Prajāpati, 6, 27, 57f, 139
Prakaṭāditya, 83
Prakṛti, 20, 55, 142, 144, 151
Prang, 95
Prapañcasāra Tantra, 131
Pratyūṣā, 188
Pravarasena II, 79
Prayāga, 148, 189
Proto-Austroloid, 1, 11, 27, 120, 151
Proto-Mongoloid, 1
Proto-Nordic, 10
Pṛthivī, 153
Pṛthivīsena, 127
Przyluski, 101, 173f
Ptolemy, 72, 169, 178, 186
Pulindas, 161, 164
Puṇḍras, 38
Punnabhadda, 3
Purus, 11
Puruṣa, 20, 92, 108, 139
Puruṣasūkta, 31
Purusottama, 37f
Puṣā, 8
Puṣan, 176
Puṣkalāvatī, 95
Puṣpaka, 149
Putanā, 71

Rādhā, 74f
Rājaśekharasūri, 149
Rājasūya, 122
Rāma, 22, 33, 41, 45, 54, 56, 58f
Rāma-Dāśarathi, 58
Rāmadatta, 48
Rāmānuja, 47, 137, 160
Rāmāyaṇa, 46, 54, 59, 177
Rāmeśvara, 148
Rapson, 186
Rāśikara, 149
Ravidāsa, 185
Raychaudhuri, H. C., 29, 33, 35, 43, 73, 78, 82
Records, 143
Ṛg-Veda, 7ff, 25, 28, 32, 34, 57, 73, 97ff, 108, 139, 151f
Rithpur C. P. record, 79
Rohtak, 192f
Rohitaka, 193
Rudra, 8, 13, 27, 90ff, 97, 99, 118, 136, 140, 138, 153, 176, 191, 196f
Rudradāman, 193
Rudrasena, 79

Rudra-Śiva, 27, 90ff, 103f, 108, 159, 197
Rukmiṇī, 75
Ruṣṭa, 130

Śabaras, 161, 164, 169
Sabitā, 8
Sadyojāta, 101, 114, 132
Sahani, 193
Śaiva, 14f, 17, 19, 22, 79, 88, 90-149, 162
Śaivaite, 42, 44, 183, 185
Śaivism, 13, 50, 82, 84, 109, 118ff, 125f, 140ff, 144, 157
Sāk, 164
Śaka, 21, 53, 123, 173f, 177, 186, 192
Śākadvīpa, 177
Śākala, 173
Śākambharī, 160
Śaka-Muruṇḍa, 186
Śākha, 196
Sākta, 14f, 17, 19, 66, 115, 124, 128, 134, 139, 145, 150-170
Śakti, 140, 154, 159, 163, 168ff
Sakuni, 70
Śākyamuni, 163
Śālaṅkāyana, 127
Śalya, 42
Śāmba, 53, 181f, 190
Sambara, 11, 73
Śaṃbara, 133, 141
Śaṃkarācārya, 13, 18, 22f, 63ff, 88, 107, 146, 169, 190
Śaṃkara-Digvijaya, 136
Saṃkarṣaṇa, 36, 39f, 44ff, 52ff, 66, 69, 131
Saṃkarṣana-Balarāma, 53
Saṃkarṣana-Vāsudeva, 40f
Saṃkhoba, 77
Sāṃkhya, 2, 20, 55, 66, 108, 118, 120, 131, 142, 144, 151
Sāṃkhya-yoga, 55
Sammoha, 21
Samndra Gupta, 30
Samudrasena, 136
Śāṇḍilya, 65ff
Saptaśatī, 166, 169
Sarabos, 186
Saraṇa, 53
Sarasvatī, 5, 14, 72, 153
Sarayū, 186
Sarnath ins., 83
Sārṅgin, 81
Saroyogin, 88
Sarva, 90f
Sarvadarśana-Saṃgraha, 133
Sarvatāta, 40
Sarvavarman, 141
Sarvavarṇā, 153
Śaśāṅka, 141
Saṣṭhī, 25
Sastri, H. P., 19
Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, 26f, 32, 34, 58, 91, 99, 172
Śatarudrīya, 27, 101, 107, 110, 142, 153
Sātavāhana, 40, 52, 86, 88
Sathakopa, 89
Satī, 150
Śatrughna, 54
Sātvata, 24, 33, 59, 82
Satyabhāmā, 75
Saura, 14f, 17, 22, 171-197
Saura daevā, 92
Saura-Saṃhita, 184
Saurāṣtras, 38f
Sāyaṇa, 98f, 154
Schoff, 164
Schrader, 54, 67
Scythian, 1, 123, 173, 177, 187,
Scytho-Iranian, 174
Scytho-Kuṣāṇa, 16, 52, 68f, 123, 179, 184f
Sdok-Kak-Thom, 20
Sembu, 104
Śeṣa, 45
Sharva, 92
She-lan-ṭa-lo, 146
Shiva, 92, 96, 103
Siboi, 93, 94, 96
Silappadikaram, 87
Siraścheda, 21
Śiśna-devāḥ, 98
Siśupāla, 42, 70
Sītā, 59, 160

Sitikaṇṭha, 90
Śiva, 5, 11, 44, 66, 90ff, 109, 118ff, 150, 153, 155, 185, 191, 193ff
Śiva-Bhāgavata, 93f, 108
Sivadāsa, 110
Śiva-dharmottara, 145
Śiva-Mahādeva, 134
Sivan, 104
Śiva-Paśupati, 11
Śiva-Purāṇa, 129
Śiva-Sūtra, 146
Si-yu-ki, 82, 168
Skanda, 5, 18, 182, 194ff
Skanda Gupta, 64, 81, 185
Skanda-Kārtikeya, 18
Skanda-Kumāra, 196
Skanda-Viśākha, 5
Soḍāsa, 51, 53
Solar, 136
Soma, 8, 25, 95
Somānanda, 146
Soroadeios, 172
Soroadios, 5
Spooner, 186
Śrīdhara Svāmin, 178
Śrīdharavarman, 192f, 194
Srīkaṇṭha, 133
Srīparvata, 128, 148
Śrīparvatasvāmin, 128
Srīśaila, 128, 137, 165
Stein, A., 97
Stobaeus, 138
Strabo, 5, 94
Sudās, 11
Sujihva, 181
Śumbha, 163, 167
Sumero-Babylonian, 158, 160
Sundarar, 145
Sulīśagrāma, 136
Śūrasena, 14, 35, 39, 41, 51, 72
Surāṣṭra, 41
Sūrya, 5, 8, 127, 171f, 174, 182f
Sūryadeva, 5, 172
Sūryamitra, 176
Susunia inscription, 52, 77
Svayambhūva, 146
Śvetadvīpa, 17, 59ff
Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, 2, 13, 106ff
Sydrakai, 94
Syr Daria, 166

Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, 34f, 58, 153, 155
Taittirīya Saṁhitā, 2, 46, 97
Takman, 95
Takṣaśilā, 29, 148
Tāmraparṇī, 87
Tantra, 18ff, 26
Tāntric, 18ff, 75
Tāntricism, 13, 18ff, 150, 165, 170, 190
Tāntrika, 135, 142, 144ff, 159, 161, 168
Tarn, 72
Tatpuruṣa, 101, 114, 132
Taxila, 30, 41, 101, 110, 157, 172f
Telang, 22
Telephus, 179
Theodore bar khomi, 181
Tīrthikas, 168f
Tiru-mangaiy-arvar, 87, 89
Tiru-marisai Piran, 87, 89
Tirumular, 145
Tiru-pan-arvar, 87, 89
Tondar-adi-Podiy-Arvar, 87, 89
Toramāṇa, 63
Tosā, 53
Toyātman, 36
Trigarta, 37
Triplicane, 145
Tripurāntaka, 136, 149
Tumburu, 105
Turvasa, 11
Tusam inscription, 82

Udayagiri, 62, 127
Udita, 126
Uditācārya, 112f
Ugra, 90
Ujjayinī, 4, 102, 110, 123, 128, 132, 136, 169, 175, 192f
Umā, 117ff, 153f, 161, 196f
Upamanyu, 17, 108

Upamita, 113, 126
Upamiteśvara, 112, 125
Ūṣā, 8, 188
Ūṣas, 151

Vācaspati Miśra, 141
Vaigai, 87
Vahurūpī, 114
Vaikuṇṭha, 61, 114
Vainya Gupta, 125
Vaiṣṇava, 4, 14f, 21f, 24-89, 124, 127, 131, 140, 160, 163f, 176
Vaiṣṇavism, 17, 90, 117, 125, 140, 182
Vākāṭaka, 79, 127
Vallee Poussin, 60
Vālmīkirāśi, 149
Vāmadeva, 101, 114, 132, 144
Vāmana avatāra, 57
Varadā, 153
Varaṇa, 147
Varāha, 62
Varāhamihira, 173, 184
Vārāṇasī, 83, 129, 143
Varṇāśramadharma, 49, 119
Vaśiṣṭha, 150
Vaśiṣṭha Dharmasūtra, 13
Vāsudeva, 3f, 6, 25, 28ff, 32, 41ff, 51ff, 66, 69, 107, 131, 155, 162
Vāsudeva, Kuṣāṇa King, 51
Vāsudevaka, 38
Vāsudevism, 39
Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, 24, 32ff, 38, 42, 44, 71, 85, 106f, 110, 182
Vāsudeva-Viṣṇu, 57, 77ff, 86
Vāyavīya-Saṃhitā, 133
Vāyu, 8f
Vāyu Purāṇa, 53, 107, 113, 129f, 148
Vedamātā, 153
Vedāntist, 126
Vedas, 2, 66, 85, 136
Vedic, 9, 25f, 70, 73, 80, 90, 99, 103, 110, 134, 139, 151f, 171, 175, 177, 190
Venkataramanayya, Dr. N., 90f, 95
Venkatesvara, S. V., 8
Vidiśā, 30, 51
Viduratha, 53
Vidyāguru, 149
Vijaya-Buddha Varman, 80
Vijayamitra, 193
Vijaya Skanda Varman, 80
Vinaśana, 72
Vināśikha, 21
Vīrabhadra, 118f
Virgin goddess, 165
Viśākha, 5, 195ff
Viṣānin, 11
Vishṇu, 82
Viṣṇu, 12, 15, 24ff, 52, 57ff, 70, 77ff, 84ff, 127, 129, 131, 140, 150, 162, 165, 172f, 177
Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, 84
Viṣṇukuṇḍin, 128
Viṣṇu Purāna, 68ff, 86, 177
Viṣṇu Trivikrama, 86
Viśvaksena, 88
Viśvavarman, 81, 165
Vraja, 68
Vṛndāvana, 75
Vṛṣṇi, 38f, 41, 53, 67
Vṛṣabha, 95
Vṛtra, 25
Vyāsa-Gītā, 145
Vyūha, 54, 56, 62, 69f

Watters, 83
Weber, 33, 42, 153, 155
Wheeler, 102, 152
White Island, 60f
Winternitz, 84, 129

Yādava, 3, 33, 38
Yama, 139
Yamī, 139
Yamunā, 148
Yajñaśrī Śātakarṇi, 52
Yajur-Veda, 2, 13, 27f, 92
Yakṣa, 3
Yāska, 9, 98
Yaudheya, 5, 193
Yavana, 4
Yasodā, 163

Yoga, 11f, 48, 66f, 85f, 107, 118ff, 131, 142
Yoga-Sūtra, 85, 107
Yogamāyā, 75
Yoni, 150
Yuan-Chwang, 82, 135, 143, 146
Yudhiṣthira, 122, 161
Yueh-chi, 136

Zaradusht, 181
Zend Avesta, 91
Zeus Ombrios, 5
Zoroaster, 181

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